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THE GENIUS OF THE GAEL

A STUDY IN CELTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

BY

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Thou over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day.

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FOREWORD

THE Genius of the Gael is the subject proposed for study in this little book. The first chapter deals with the composite Irish people of to-day and their character as resting largely on kinship and foster-kinship with the Gael. The last chapter is a study of that educative influence, here called the Gaelic Ethos, by which a race of people may be said to foster —in the spiritual sense—the strangers cast upon their shores. The second chapter deals with the main thesis: it is an imperfect but faithful attempt to analyse the psychology of the Celt as one of many varieties in human kindred. The Gael is distinguished from the Celt as the species best known in Ireland, and for the most part it is the Celt as Gael who is under consideration in these pages.

The method of procedure is: (1) to study

the Gael through his manifestations in Irish character as we know it to-day, noting the influences under which that character has evolved historically, and keeping in view the characteristics of other peoples in whom also the Celtic element is presumably strong; (2) to show how the observed characteristics of Irishmen, in so far as they differ from others, may be explained by the prevalence in them of a certain psychological variety, structural, or functional, or temperamental, which is the fundamental quality of the Celtic mind. The effects of this quality are traced through its outward manifestations in social genius, political ability, development of institutions, literature, religion. Each of these is the topic of a separate chapter.

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I

THE COMPOSITE IRISH NATION OF TO-DAY

It must contain and represent the races of Ireland. It must not be Celtic, it must not be Saxon. The Brehon Law and the maxims of Westminster, the cloudy and lightning genius of the Gael, the placid strength of the Sassenach, the marshalling insight of the Norman—these are the components of such a nationality.

THOMAS DAVIS.

CHAPTER I

THE COMPOSITE IRISH NATION OF TO-DAY

THE wonderful variety of human nature is a constant source of stimulus and delight. We are exactly like each other in so many ways and yet in others so strangely different. The multiplicity of these likenesses and differences divides us into natural groups, as, for example, political parties, religious communities, racial units, composite nations. The members of each group have some common characteristics the causes of which lie deep in heredity, far back in history, or near by in the idiosyncrasies of the individual and the special influences amid which he moves. For a political party the characteristic turns ostensibly on the deliberate adoption of a certain social ideal

to be realized. With religious bodies it is much the same, in so far as the difference goes deep. But race distinctions and national characteristics elude concise description and baffle explanation for the most part. It is with Race and Nationality, however, that we have to do in these pages.

The race had some common pair of ancestors, who varied as individuals somewhat from their fellows. Their descendants tend more or less to perpetuate such variations and to vary farther from each other and from ancestral type. In this process of variation at any stage marriage with outsiders plays a part. Also variation of habitat counts for much. Moreover, through ideas, sympathy, and conduct, the members of the group react one on the other in each generation and from generation to generation throughout the centuries. From this process of mixed heredity and education the race emerges. In the course of the process ideals of character are developed, and operate to the formation of

character in all those who come within their sphere of influence—not only members of the race but aliens entering into humane association with it. The race hands down its character to its children in the flesh. To its foster-children and natural children alike it hands down its ideas of that which it gives out to itself that it ought to be. Also it backs these ideas in each generation to the best of that generation's ability—practical, logical, and literary ability—by stimulus to reason, imagination, religious instinct, sympathy—by personal influence, discipline, custom, and law.

Given a mixture of races living together and dominated by ideals distinctive enough to confer idiosyncrasy on normal members of the group, and in due course a well-blended composite people emerges. It is a people, not by unity of race but by community of spirit, a community that makes itself felt in a deep consciousness of moral affinity, mutual intelligibility beneath particular differences of opinion, a similarity of view in matters of

homely common sense, humour, and social instinct. Its degree of national unity is quite a different thing from that of a people recently drawn in from many sources, living together in amity and with common interests, but separated by manifold diversity in traditional culture. Such a people we have in the United States of America: it has a real unity based on broad principles of universal humanity, but it is not a composite nation yet in the intimate quasi-racial sense.

France, with striking variety of race, is emphatically a nation in the more complete sense. The differences are great and they are localized, but Norman, Breton, Gascon, Cevennois, and Provençal all are French to the core, whatever else besides. Of Great Britain and of Germany the same may be said, though not perhaps to the same extent.

Ireland is in many respects the most notable example of a composite people, with much individual and sectional variety, consolidated in a subtle community of spirit, under extra-

ordinary historical difficulties. Geography has been on her side, but history since the twelfth century has worked steadily against her. On the other hand, much has been done for her unity by the early development of a native literature and popular literary habit, and, therefore, of an Irish "Ethos," attractive and convincing. The Irishry of Ireland and its remarkable power of absorbing into itself the strangers settled as superior persons in its midst passed into a proverb—"More Irish than the Irish"—in those old sad days when the doings of the "degenerate English" in Ireland roused the wrath of kings. In later days more success was attained in keeping the English colonists to themselves: a considerable section is divided by religion from the rest of Ireland to-day, and a section of this section has its hand against the hand of Ireland in respect of Irish Nationality. England in our day has disowned the Irish garrison, but there it is. Long may it stay: there is no call for it to surrender. It is wanted by the Ireland, which

after all it loves, to stay within the fort and take honourable part in its administration. But be this as it may, certain it is that the members of the Irish garrison as a whole have not escaped the infection of the Irish turn of mind. Least of all have the stalwarts within its circle.

I have seen something of Irishmen in all quarters of Ireland, and I was brought up in Ulster among the Anglo-Irish people of Lough Erne's river-valley, near the noted Orange town of Enniskillen. Everywhere, if one enters into social contact with the people, one finds the Irish touch, a liveliness of mind, individuality, a personal interest in other people, and courteous manners. The quality is too subtly compounded to be briefly described, but it is unmistakable: of course it is not complete or equally deep in all, and there are exceptions; but the form of it at least prevails throughout the island. An Irishman is Irish in his view of social life and his ideal of manly behaviour even though his origin be English or Lowland Scotch and his temperament racy

of the original soil. And so the fiery Ulster Unionist and the hot Home Ruler from Connaught have a delicate freemasonry that makes them socially more intelligible to each other than either is to his own political friend. The mutual intelligibility of Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Timothy Healy is a thing of which one feels assured as a psychological necessity. Neither would, I think, deny it. Kinship in spirit is a very different thing from political or any other form of intellectual agreement. It is consistent with prejudice and marked antagonism of opinion in mundane matters. But it makes people able to get on with each other whether they agree or not.

Many hidden causes have no doubt worked together for good in the development of this overlying or underlying quality which makes all Irish kin. Ireland herself is a training-ground: she counts for much with her soft, variable climate, her unexpected mingling of mountains, lake, and plain, her matchless beauty spots—so they seem to us—her ring of

varying seas, her rock-bound coasts, and the clean sweet air that sweeps across her. Nor can we think of Ireland without calling to mind a delightful sense of the people living on her soil. One could hardly be in Ireland and escape that influence. The type of the born teacher meets you on every hand, the person with interesting ideas, sympathy, and power of expression. Something of race there seems to be, and something of traditional culture which makes for this result: its effect on other people, and especially on the young, is certainly towards the development in them of similar characteristics. Thus in modern times, for centuries past, the Irish of each generation have fostered the new-comers and added them in spirit to the Gaelic race. For the Gaelic race it is—a branch of the Celt—which forms the nucleus of the Irish nation and breathes into Irish nationality its all-pervading and most expressive spirit.

Mere sociability effects much wherever the racial currents meet. Nevertheless it is true

that, in the deeper things of mind and life, the full influence of this spirit throughout the composite people has begun only in our time to make itself felt. The English in Ireland during the last quarter century have been learning what old Irish history and literature have to teach. The Irish Renaissance affects all classes of society. The President of the Irish Literary Society is of typical Anglo-Irish Unionist family, non-Gaelic and Protestant. All its present officers and a good moiety of its lecturers appear, so far as their names go, to be also of the alien race. There are many Unionists among its members: it taboos politics, but talks about Irish things every Saturday night for seven months in the year. This is in London, which is honeycombed also by branches of the Gaelic League. In Ireland the Gaelic League is a popular educational movement, a rousing mental tonic, bringing in the language and literature, casting out intellectual stagnation and sordid life-habits of all kinds wherever it goes. Gaelic studies

have made their way into University circles, and promise to hold high place. The Irish Texts Society published its first volume in 1899: now there are twelve such issues of Gaelic texts with scholarly introductions, commentary, and translations. Nor have skilful writers been slow to collect, rearrange, and sometimes rewrite the old stories in popular and attractive forms, preserving the fine style and racy spirit by faithful adherence to the original so far as possible. Historians, too, have been at work dealing "faithfully" with their department of the literature. In a word, the Gaelic literature is being given to the world, and for the Irish of every race the gift is too rich in local colour, too good to be neglected or overlooked. In one form or another it will be read from end to end of Ireland, and like a magnet to iron filings, it will draw together and set in rank the divers members of the Irish people, divided as they are to-day by a political controversy that will soon be set at rest.

Of this potent influence the men and women of our generation knew, for the most part, nothing when they were growing up. In the old days, before the slow-coming, long-lasting eclipse of Gaelic and the Gaelic literature, it must have been a potent influence indeed. No doubt the old stories themselves—more particularly the stories of Finn and the Fiana of Erin—lingered long, and here and there still survive for recital by the peasant's fireside: but the tradition itself survived more universally and in a more important sense. It lives in the common Irishman's idea of what a true man is, and what, therefore, every "decent" Irishman should expect himself to be. Every man has some such idea: if he be a Christian man the Christian ideal of humanity enters largely into it; but in most strong men there is, underlying the Christian conscience, something more primitive, derived from an older ancestral past or acquired from early pagan literary influences, and if that more primitive influence is dignified, tender,

and true, it reinforces and is reinforced by the Christian ideal accordingly. The land that grows heroes will yield a good crop of saints. So it did in the Irish case.

We may take it that the "decent" Irishman's idea of what he ought to be has a good deal to do with the ideal of a hero presented in Gaelic literature. I quote from Mr. Standish O'Grady this fine estimate of its worth.

"Those heroes and heroines were the ideals of our ancestors, their conduct and character were to them a religion, the bardic literature was their Bible. It was a poor substitute, one may say, for that which found its way into the island in the fifth century. That is so, yet, such as it was, under its nurture, the imagination and spiritual susceptibilities of our ancestors were made capable of that tremendous outburst of religious fervour and exaltation which characterized the centuries that succeeded the fifth, and whose effect was felt throughout a great portion of Europe. *It was*

the Irish bards and that heroic age of theirs which nourished the imagination, intellect, and idealism of the country to such an issue. Patrick did not create these qualities. They may not be created. He found them, and directed them into a new channel." [1]

It was indeed to them as a crude pagan Bible, undeveloped but their own, teaching them religion, morals, manners, literature, history. Thus, more greatly and beyond all comparison more deeply, the Hebrew Bible in its earlier unfinished forms taught the Jews. The Irish Texts Society might be likened, with all reverence and in great humility, to those exiled Hebrew scholars of Babylonian times, whose literary labour laid the foundation of the old Testament Canon.[2] Out of their

[1] *Bardic History of Ireland*, Introduction, vii. Standish O'Grady. The italics are mine.

[2] It raises a side-issue here, but I venture to think that if the Protestant minority had not had the English Bible and read it so diligently, they would be more distinct from their countrymen than they are in the kind of literary sense which characterizes both races in Ireland. The

labours will presently emerge a select body of story, adventure, legend, vision, and song, showing forth in its first volume the heroic ideal of the pagan Gael, and in its second the beginning of Irish history, the dawn of Christianity, and the development of the Gaelic State and Church. The well-purposed, though partly fictitious Milesian history should be there, no less than the Brehon laws. First rank would I give to the Colloquy of Patrick with the old men of the pagan past, fine parable as it is of the genial intelligent spirit which is the clue to Ireland's magnificent record of tolerance and mutual respect in sacred matters.

In the development of the ancient Irish State it appears that pains were taken by the dominant Milesian race under Christian influence to bring all tribes by all means into the common cause as "Men of Erin." In law, as in literature, the subject peoples were

English language in Ireland keeps its original Elizabethan lines; it is characterized further and enriched by drafts on Gaelic idiom and metaphor.

recognized, provision was even made for the absorption of individual aliens into the full tribal life. The Milesians' own contribution to literature consists mainly in a "skeleton of artificial history pieced together by the schools: upon this structure were overlaid various patches of the traditions of the older races." [1] By the tenth century this history, dealing largely in genealogies, had taken on the theory of racial unity, *i.e.*, of one common descent for all the free peoples. Later the distinction between free and unfree was lost; but before that time race-prejudices had died out among the Irish-speaking Irish, though tribal feuds in the form of faction lingered long.

The old Milesians had some political genius behind their pious fiction. What they did in the tenth century for practical advantage and human comradeship and love of country, the Irish of our day, with wider views, larger experience, and a more potent ideal of united

[1] Irish Texts Society, vol. vii: *The Book of the Lays Fionn*, Introduction, p. xxxv. Eoin MacNeil.

Ireland as the object of patriotic love, will surely effect and develop more completely in a people much less divided as to status and prospects than were the people of the Irish Pentarchy ten centuries ago.

There will be a swift cure for all political heartaches in work for the good of Ireland, and her increase in wealth, health, happiness, and beauty. The old Milesian genius will again prevail, but on a larger scale, to build up an Ireland of the future " in which all her sons of every race and creed within her shores will bring their tributes, great or small, to the great temple of national enterprise and national statesmanship and national happiness." [1]

[1] Speech on the Third Reading of the Home Rule Bill, 1913, by Mr. John Redmond.

II

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CELT

To its own impulse every creature stirs ;
Live by thy light, and earth will live by hers.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

CHAPTER II

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CELT

In the title of this chapter there is a tacit assumption to which the cautious thinker may well take exception. It implies that something, going to the root of the matter, may be said about average Celtic nature that is not true of human nature generally—not true, in particular, of some other human nature with which we compare it. A thoughtful friend states the objection thus: "You speak of the Celt, by which you mean practically the Irish," he says, "as if the Irishman had characteristics exceptional in human nature. Now, in fact, he is very like other Europeans; is it not the Englishman rather than the Irishman who is so odd?"

This criticism contains a truth which should not escape us. The Englishman, however, has been characterized and explained by that master of literature, Matthew Arnold. His oddness, such as it is, has been traced to his genesis from the mixture of two strong racial currents, each carrying on a perpetual dialectic with the other. It costs one an effort not to digress further on this delightful theme, the weaving of Celt with Teuton to produce the Englishman. What chiefly concerns us here, however, is that he is not the typical Teuton, though more Teuton than Celt.

Behind, and overtopping the Englishman, we must place the German, who, as compared with the Celt, is much more non-Celtic. In short, we must include in our purview all those nations in which the Teutonic race-element preponderates. These may be contrasted with the nations to the west and south of them, and one might frame a theory on the psychology of the Teuton—that marked variety of the human species. We know the Teuton

by his divergence from the Celt, and the Celt by his divergence from the Teuton. When both are present we pick each out from the other, much as one picks out the fair men from the dark men in a crowd.

It is not without interest to inquire into the psychological ground of the characteristics by which such selection is made. In a Saxon assembly we do easily recognize the presence of a stray Celt, and this apart from accent or physique, and even after a long course of naturalization in England. I, for one, have recognized him at first sight times out of mind, by his gesture in every minute detail, the curves of his wrinkles, the movements of his eye, by his turn of phrase, by the tone of his feeling, by the form of his thought.

I speak mainly of the Gaelic Irishman, though not of him alone. I have met the replica of an Irish waiter in one of the Italian valleys of Monte Rosa. I have seen a Highlander and an Irishman look like brothers on a platform, and I have discovered Irish

affinities in Welshmen at first sight. Within limits the type stands out plainly in all its varieties. We are concerned here, not with the varieties, but with the type. We must remember, too, that though the Irish Gael stands fairly for the type, it is not every Irishman who is an Irish Gael. Nor need this cross-multiplicity of Irish types confuse us seriously, because, after all, as we shall see later, it is the Irish Gael that has given a "character" to the Irish people.

Apart from various other racial differences the nations of Europe differ to-day, as they have throughout the historic period, by a larger or smaller infusion of the Celtic stock. In Europe, as a whole, and in each of the more western nations of Europe treated as a separate unit, the Celtic element increases from east to west. The most Celtic nation is this nation of ours in Ireland. In it there is so much Gaelic blood, and such a preponderance of Gaelic influence, that it is ethnologically reasonable, as well as politically and socially

inevitable, to describe it as a Gaelic nation, though not wholly Gael. Ireland is, in fact, much more truthfully Gael-land than England is Angle-land; but the ancient Gael was wise in his generation, and for all generations, in this—he never imposed a tribe name or a race name on the land of his conquest. From the dawn of history, it has been known by the name of the goddess—nay, as itself the goddess—motherland of all its sons, conferring on them alike that title of the men of Eire, in which all race distinctions are submerged.

The clearest type of the Celt we can find is, what we know and the world generally with more or less accuracy knows, as the typical Irishman. We think of him specially as the Irishman of the West. It is a fact that he personally stands out in contrast to the typical Englishman so-called, who is, however, much less clearly characterized racially, and perhaps in these days more characterized by his habits and traditions than by his real mental type. For a contrast of type it is better to compare

the Irishman as Celt with the German—the most obviously German German—as Teuton. Thus the special influences of the time in England, the cosmopolitan race-mixture and abnormal development of town life may be eliminated in the contrast. The English, even apart from these later influences, are, as has already been said, a mixed race, and now they are a mixed race in which the elements are much mixed up.

Let this suffice as prologue to the statement of the problem. Our inquiry assumes that we know whom we mean by the Gael—the Connaughtman perhaps would be the most typical representative—and we ask for a description of his characteristics, and, if possible, for a definition of the essential characteristic which lies at the root of him, and by which he is differentiated from his fellows. Common sayings on the subject abound. Friends of the Gael, and his detractors no less, delight to sum him up in a sentence or a chapter.

He is the dreamer in Europe, says one—the

visionary idealist, whose life is in the force and intensity of his imagination, and whose deeds are as naught. Artistic by temperament, he is ineffective in execution—*unpractical* essentially. His life is in his own mind apart from interest in material conditions. He lives in a house much out of repair, with broken china, in untidy rooms, of which the doors do not shut. But that time of which the poet speaks is with him always.

In the same strain another explains the economic condition of the country now, and its political unsuccess throughout the centuries, by the well-known incapacity of this dreamer for practical life — his lack of executive industry in material things.

On the other hand, I have heard it well argued that practical genius is the special mark of the Celt in history, and that the Gaelic Irishman all over the world is showing himself to-day, by contrast with the Teuton, as the man who does things, whose resourceful mind is most frequently at its best in devising means

to ends, and accomplishing the ends, while the Teuton feels and dreams and thinks as poet and philosopher. It is easy to illustrate this view of the case. The sentimentalist of Europe is the German. He is the poet, the Frenchman is the artist. Irishmen have left the marks of their executive genius all over the history of the British Empire, and elsewhere as well. There is no lack of practical effectiveness in the Irish immigrant across the seas.

Again, it is generally held by admirers, and not denied by detractors, that in every nation, and within these islands especially, the Celtic element is anti-materialistic in its influences and aspirations. The mission of the Celt to humanity, it has been said, is to turn attention towards the spiritual significance of life, and that not only in the religious sense, but in every sense. It is his genius to believe, and in practice to teach everywhere and always and in relation to all things, the truth that the goods of the soul are good *per se*, and the

goods of the body, good merely as a means to them—that "the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment." No one would seriously dispute that the Celt has exceptional gifts for such a mission, though many may deny the value of the mission, or laugh it to scorn. What concerns us now is the characteristic alleged of this European race to look through "the things seen," which are part of the means to life, and reach out hands to the "things unseen," which are life itself. We need not pause to dwell upon the evidence, so obvious and abundant is it. The Highland Gael is noted throughout Presbyterian Scotland for his gifts of religious insight and power, and he is famous in literature for the development of the same gift in that sympathetic appreciation of nature, which is the child of imagination and the parent of poetry. The Irish peasant is known, by those who know him, to maintain through a lifetime of want and suffering a rare capacity for being upheld in cheerfulness, as well as courage, by his grip

on the realities of the unseen in his own soul. On the other hand, the prosperous Irishman cares less than another for the heaping up of wealth, gives profusely at an earlier stage in his financial progress, suffers less from pecuniary worries, and in general is less moved by purely materialistic motives. Possessions mean less to him, whatever his particular form of joy may be, whether religion at one extreme, or the spectacle of the circus-show of human life at the other.

By another common saying, the Irish people —the Gaelic Irish—are declared to be at the bottom one of the most conservative people on earth; and evidence is not lacking. Another claims their kinship with the French in easily roused revolutionary tendencies; and it is impossible to study the history of the last twenty-five years without admitting their aptness to absorb new ideas and organize movements accordingly for the radical alteration of social conditions. If both these sayings contain truth, they assert that a people of

marked conservative instinct show a highly developed capacity for change in the face of enormous difficulties; and this, after due allowance has been made for circumstances, remains as an interesting statement concerning national character.

Probably it is not independent of another less obvious fact which is abundantly evidenced throughout Irish history. I mean the grip on the primitive form of life maintained throughout the development of new forms which marks the native growth of Irish society. The Brehon laws may be called in evidence. The persistence of the primitive type in the civilized type endured till the introduction of the foreign semi-feudal system from England. The movement of the last quarter of a century is to a large extent, though not wholly, a reversion, in effect, if not in form, to the native social type, the instincts corresponding to which have survived the flood of alien ideas and enforced habits. It has taken less than a generation to free the Irish serf from the

clinging sense of servility. It would seem this can only be because, the pressure removed, his nature sprang back at once to the expression of that sense of the freeman which the persistence of his primitive nature had preserved inborn in him throughout the servile times.

The observations made in this sense might be summed up briefly in the statement that the Gael is conservative in his ideas, and remains primitive in his instincts, while he grows. With all new acquisitions he is unforgetful of the old.

And that reminds one of other things about him. The unforgetful Gael shows himself as such in the faithfulness of his affections to friend and sweetheart, family and native land. Whether or not he be "wax to receive," he is certainly "marble to retain." As unforgetful, too, in the wider sense of a persistent physical and psychical nature, the civilized Gael of universities, ball-rooms, clubs, parliaments, and commercial syndicates, of manufacturing

industries, electric light, daily newspapers, telephones, and motor-cars—this civilized Gael is as primitive as his forefathers beneath all this modern embroidery of pleasure and convenience. The great primitive instincts still brace the will and warm the heart of him, linking man to nature and nature to man. Thus the human nature in him is broad and deep, full of possibilities, some evil, no doubt, but to every evil a capacity for self-control corresponding.

It is impossible, however, to dwell on this aspect of character without being driven on to the assertion of some complementary quality; and we naturally bethink ourselves of that comment on the Gael which is most familiar, most universally admitted. That he is swift of wit and readily moved no one will deny. His admirers praise the ready aptness of his repartee, the quickness of his intellectual uptake, his adaptability of mood, his smartness in resource, his swift and varied imagination. His detractors sneer at the same qualities

differently stated, and the epithets excitable, fickle — possibly hysterical — are used. As an outcome of these qualities every one admits accessibility to ideas, with adaptability of feeling and instinct accordingly. In this we have, of course, the making of the liberal or progressive element in the Irishman, and not in him only, since without the Celtic fringe in Great Britain the prospects of the Liberal Party there would be dark indeed.

Thus the combination of persistent primitiveness with congenital adaptability yields the conservative progressiveness which characterizes the Irish political atmosphere to-day, and which is, on the other hand, so strikingly exemplified in the old-world wisdom of the Brehon Law. It would not be easy to match this ancient code of law for the skill with which it adapts old ideas to new circumstances, so that the ideals shall be preserved though not unchanged.

It would be easy to add to this list of common sayings descriptive of the Gael, but

it is time to take a forward step and seek some true account of that root of character in him which differentiates him racially from his fellows. The external manifestations of difference are so many and various, and so subtly interwoven with universal human traits, that it is impossible to resist the conviction that we have here some deep-seated difference of human kind by which the forms of life and its expression are modified in an infinite variety of ways. The larch-tree differs from the forest oak in ways too many to be counted up. The botanist seeks here for the characteristic difference from which others flow or round which they are grouped. Our task is similar to his. Let us approach it in like manner, seeking for the one or two distinctive qualities which promise to lead down into the heart of the matter.

Now, all observers are struck by the fact that Irish personality is essentially positive. Hence its force and fascination. Hence also its liability to exaggerations. Hence, too, its

contradictions, since it insists on being what it is, whether self-contradictory or not. Hence, most important of all, there follows from these the moral dialectic by which it sustains itself.

Thus the genuine Irishman of the West has little instinctive taste for the pursuit of either virtue or truth by the Aristotelian method of steering in the mean between two extremes. On the contrary, his manner of self-correction when he finds himself on one extreme horn of argument or mood is to stretch across to the other horn, and so raise or lower his being on to the ground of a better common sense. And this the healthy Irishman does for the most part instinctively. He is in a rage of resentment, and recovers himself suddenly by the revival of some natural fellow-feeling with the person who has offended him. He corrects himself, not by *sup*pression, but by some new form of *ex*pression. His ability for swift transition from one mood to the opposite is the natural counterpart of his positiveness; it

has developed in him as the necessary alternative to the abstract self-control which is so conspicuous in the Englishman. Thus, being both emphatically positive and easily moved, the Gael makes himself conspicuous by what I have called his moral dialectic, the maintenance of opposites in mood—of thesis and anti-thesis in meditation. It can hardly be said that he has any characteristic moral trait without the suggestion of its opposite as also characteristic.

The Irishman is self-assertive: he is also instinct with consideration for the selfness of another. He may talk much, but he seldom loses his power of listening. If he allows himself to boast unduly, his good manners will presently prescribe a pause to let you have your turn. He has a vivid sense of respect due to himself, but it seldom extinguishes his sense of respect as equally due to others. He is self-conscious and easily offended; he is other-conscious also, and not hard to be reconciled. His quarrelsomeness and his

courtesy are a twin growth. He is uncompromising in his adherence to his opinion while it is his opinion; but he has a rare accessibility to the ideas of others. He is sensitive and easily hurt; he is elastic and soon recovers balance. And from this tissue of opposites—his vivid human nature—there bubbles up within him, as from a well-spring, an inexhaustible fund of humour to gladden our toil-worn race. For the basis of humour is the sense of the normal self-contradictoriness of human nature in detail.

Contrast and transitions come to his nature with ease. Thus his way of going right is by the maintenance of pairs of opposite qualities in him. His way of going wrong is, of course, the universal way, by concentration on one of the two; only the positiveness of his nature makes him go more wrong than another in the absence of the compensating quality. This is because he has a less-developed instinct for pure negative self-control than other people. Some can be cured

of their mischievous tendencies, if not of their inmost faults, by a system of pure repressive education in controlling exaggerations. It is well known that Irish human nature, on the average, does not respond happily to this treatment. To merely check exaggerations is to sit on the safety-valve. The more excellent way is in this case also the readier to take effect: it lies in the development of the complementary quality. Thus character is not repressed but developed. Virtue drives a pair of steeds. Humanity is writ large in the personality of the Gael, and written all over it in a countless variety of characters.

From this may be inferred, as a consequence, the familiar fact that he imprints his likeness on most strangers who come within his social sphere. They also are human through and through, though less positive, *i.e.*, less endowed with the courage of their humanity, than he is. It is natural that they should accept his leadership in this respect, and develop, for good or for ill, that instinct

of his to be emphatically whatever he happens to be.

Positiveness of personality shows itself from another point of view, in that chief inconvenience of Irish human nature its persistent irrepressibility. Check its expression in fifty ways, and, after the immediate occasion of repression is past, it reappears in all its multiform humanity as vigorous as ever. In political contests this gives the Irishman a certain advantage which explains some events that happen in our times.

Gaelic irrepressibility is, however, as unlike the inconvertible stability of the Teuton as can be. It preserves itself by maintaining its essential ends while adapting its means to changing circumstances. The common human lot being indeed what it is, adaptability is a condition to the maintenance of irrepressibility. If the plant does not turn to grow round the stone, then does the stone crush out the plant. On the other hand, irrepressible vitality is a motive to efforts of adaptation. For an ex-

ample, note how in nineteenth-century politics the Irish people took the British Constitution, which they continued to dislike, but under which they lived, and converted it into an instrument for their purposes, using it with such effectiveness as to astonish the rightful heirs to its traditions.

Thus irrepressibility and adaptability go together, and are both rooted in the positiveness or vitality of nature which shows the wrong side of itself in the Gaelic exaggeration of which we often hear so much. A Gael standing outside his social world would, doubtless, exaggerate whatever he had happened to carry with him into his outsidedness. But he is too positive to stand outside more than he is obliged. He needs a sphere of social life in which to express himself. He lives in his world, and it teaches him balance, correcting the emphasis he impresses on it by some other emphasis which it suggests. More than another, however, he requires an adequate world, demanding a completely rounded

human nature from him. If such a nature is demanded he is apt to respond to the demand. If not, well the greater natures will escape onesidedness by inventing outlets for themselves, but the average will yield an endless variety of quaint human oddments, eccentricities, limited social types, self-confident individualities of all sorts eager with abounding life.

Positiveness, irrepressibility, adaptability, with these go of necessity that quality of manner, an assertive personality, taking itself and its audience for granted, which is either the most delightful or the most obnoxious thing, according to its character-context. Consequences and the opinion of others are not necessarily disregarded; but in all cases the Gael expresses *himself* in his talk and act, even when he is most under external influences. Hence that extraordinary appearance of originality which even most ordinary Irishmen usually display. They are original, even when commonplace, by mere expressiveness of

personality. The effect of this is sometimes disagreeable.

This positiveness of personality, or energetic vitality of expression, showing itself in all these ways, might be said to constitute *the warp in the web of Gaelic character*.

But without a woof of vital tenacity not inferior, the web would soon be broken by the disintegrating influences of modern life. The Gaelic woof in the web is evidently that quality, whatever it be, which facilitates the expression of positive personality in adaptation to the demands of a world bristling with complexity and antagonism. The adaptability of the irrepressible Gael—the energetic dialectic by which character develops with the minimum of negation—these point to some characteristic other than positiveness, *per se*, even if only for the preservation of such positiveness.

"The lightning genius of the Gael," so Thomas Davis named it. As we ponder on the metaphor its truth grows on us:—

> The light breaks out over the sky.
> All things on sky and earth become visible.

Just so there is a swift illumination in the mind.

It seems almost a crime to analyse the poet's thought. Forgive me if I attempt a task so ungracious. At this moment you are *actually* conscious of the few matters on which your attention is engaged. You are *potentially* conscious of all that you have experienced in mood and in idea hitherto, and you are potentially conscious, also, of several other things going on about you, claiming your attention by impressions on eye and ear, to which you pay no heed. Of all these possibilities you are not conscious, but, should occasion arise, you would be made conscious of them with greater or less swiftness and certainty. *With greater or less swiftness and certainty* —we are all familiar with the many grades of possibility expressed in these words, the reluctance with which the train of thought explodes in some for the reinstatement of matters remote from present attention, the sudden flash with which the subconscious

becomes the conscious in others. The consequences of this difference are very wide. Grasp of intellect as well as readiness of wit wait on the man whose mental processes are what we call swift.

Of the Gael as swift-witted I have already spoken. His repartee is the most punctual thing about him, his memory seldom laggard, his imagination far-seeking, his perceptions quick. His claim to the characteristic is sufficiently established by these, its direct and obvious signs. Moreover, the mind that acts swiftly is practically a mind that sees many points at once—in a single pulse or circling of attention. Hence it is a mind capable of wide intuitive, not merely logical, grasp. The man who has it can condense all the main points of an elaborate argument, or a complex conception, into a circle that can be embraced by one sweep of the attention. His mind tends to react concretely, *i.e.*, as one whole, on the problems that present themselves, whether in art, in literature, in politics, in social life.

Further, this swift wit tends also to correctness of judgment. Outside the grasp of consciousness at any moment lie other items still subconscious, and if these continue subconscious their neglect is a source of error. They are like the repartees that occur to us the morning after the dinner-party. But the swift mind is swift because it is lively; all that comes within the circle of possible experiences stimulated by the occasion springs readily into consciousness—claims attention. And so, except when the absorption of attention is extreme, no item cognate to the matter in hand is likely to allow itself to be forgotten. The Celt and the Teuton—the German—seem to be at their extreme points of contrast here, the one with his patient genius—it is real genius too—for covering the ground thoroughly step by step, the other with his happy gift for seizing all the salient points in a single organic perception.

This quality consists of facility in using the mind as a whole on each experience, which

implies facility in apprehending all the aspects of an experience. It is an ability, therefore, for experience in the concrete, and for this reason it is here called concreteness. The Gaelic mind is described as concrete, *i.e.*, ready to react as a whole. No one will, I think, deny that our Gaelic peasant, as well as his Gaelic betters, has this gift. I have tried to show its connection with his most familiar trait—the flashing wit. A Kerryman explains to the inspector of beekeeping an ingenious contrivance he had invented. "The idea came into my mind all at once," said he, "just as you see the sun shine out suddenly on the mountain-side."

Concrete intelligence and flashing wit appear as the manifestations of a fundamental characteristic, namely, a high degree of liability in the subconscious to pass into the conscious. Herein lies the essence of this whole matter. In the region of nerve-life transformations of physical energy take place, and there is, doubtless, some transformation of energy which

coincides with the emergence of psychical life or consciousness. It may well be that one person, or one race of persons, differs from another by degree of liability in the nerve-centres to effect this particular transformation ; and the man who is more easily conscious is, therefore, more concrete in intelligence, more flashing in imagination, more quick in wit. Thus it may be that the swiftly moving, easily wakened, concretely reacting mind of the Gael is what it is, because he differs from his contrasted type in temperament or in the very quality of his nerve-physique. On this hypothesis he is built to convert the sum-total of energy available for his organism, so that in him a larger portion of it is the physical correlate of consciousness than in other cases. This difference is of a kind, moreover, which would seem within limits to be susceptible of increase or decrease even in the life of an individual. It is, therefore, easily conceivable as the difference between two branches of the same race, slight, probably, in the

original divergence, but cumulating under favourable circumstances with the generations.

The wide-awakeness of the man in the Dublin street—or, better still, in the streets of Cork—is a direct sign of the lightness with which consciousness slumbers in him. Whatever is in him, or can be in him, awakens on slight provocation, and sits up at once. Hence his peculiar gifts, of which enough has been said; hence also certain weaknesses. He is more easily distracted from the particular work which he has in hand by the myriad life of feeling and thought, ever ready to surge up within him. In a new situation he discovers practical genius (as already noted), because that in him which can master the situation springs to light in time. He is resourceful, swift to see the facts, and no less swift to strike. On the other hand, he is inferior in the Teuton's gift of dogged executive — the German industry whereby

> Tasks in hours of insight will'd,
> Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

The Gael, it is true, has a persistence of his own; his ideas persist and thus uphold his activity in resistance to the distracting throng of motives new-born hour by hour. It is by understanding this, which is his strength, that he will hold his own better and better, as there is more demand for vivid life in the world about him. But in routine persistence, as in doing thoroughly one thing at a time, the Teuton—I mean particularly the German—will always score. Moreover, the energy which is not used for consciousness is all to the good to be used otherwise. The English people, for the most part, resemble the Germans in their gifts.

How shall we name, in brief and popular terms, this characteristic of the Gaelic mind to become easily whatever it has in it to become. You may describe it in metaphor so far as metaphor is helpful. The mind of the Gael is as a phosphorescent sea, most part obscure, but all parts ready to break into radiant light. In dry psychological terms the best phrase I

can think of is *facility of consciousness*. "Mobile," "closely knit," and "concrete" are also good descriptive words.

Here, then, is the woof of our web. It explains the moral dialectic of the positive personality, the easy adaptability of the irrepressible. The reaction may be through the intervention of reason, or it may be merely by the suggestion of opposites, but certainly one quality in excess is a stimulus tending to awake its opposite. Now, with facility of consciousness this tendency grows towards a certainty. The mean of reason is easily preserved by a natural balance of instincts, each of which evokes the other.

And as regards adaptability to circumstances without repression of personality, it is clear that, except to a person deficient in the raw material of human nature, this same quality makes adaptation easy and, under good conditions, tends to the perfect development of the natural human type. For if there be anything that can respond to the circumstances it

will declare itself. Education is of prime importance in such case.

So far we have conceived Gaelic character as the interweaving of two primal characteristics. *Facility of consciousness is the woof of the web.* Looking closer there seems reason to think that it is *the Celtic characteristic per se,* and that the positiveness which it throws into such strong relief is just the force of universal human nature preserved in all its primal vitality by the skill of the Gael in making things suit his ends. It is probable that the Boer of the Transvaal and his European brother, the Dutchman of Friesland, are as positive in personality as any Western Gael. They, too, have preserved their primitiveness, and have established a claim to irrepressibility of type. But like the Gael as they actually are in their primal vitality, one smiles at the comparison, so unlike are they as a whole; and, in particular, the two types are contrasted by their manner of maintaining their type in a hostile world. The Boer treks into

the wilderness to carve out of it a new world for himself. The Frieslander wins his country by patient labour from the sea, and maintains his freedom by letting in the waters when required. The Dutchman throughout his history stands, indeed, as the type of primal force, masterful to nature, on the defensive to other men. He is essentially not marked by the Gaelic trait of adaptability, as he is certainly not marked by any of the other qualities which we have traced to the same source in facility of consciousness. It is the similarity of a certain section of the English people to the Dutch that has made them the chief builders of new States throughout the world, by the free labour of individual settlers. The Celt, on the contrary, excels in moulding his social habitat, and seeks more persistently to establish harmony between himself and it.

In another and even more essential way positive individuality is preserved by that concreteness of reaction on experience which goes with facility of consciousness. For confirma-

tion let us look to ourselves; do we not know that positiveness of judgment and unhesitating resolve are, in a reasonably cautious mind, dependent on the sense that we have seen all round the matter—taken a concrete view—and thus are guaranteed against errors of oversight? Probably the least Celtic of us have had in our lives one experience at least of being absolutely sure that a particular course was the course to take, and have known that this sureness was grounded in the certainty that the whole of us was awake at the instant and concurred in the decision. The consciousness of being all there, and with no objection to the course proposed, not only frees the impulse from mental check, but gives that peculiar sense of inner freedom and power which marks to himself all the actions of the positive man. If I have no doubt, and feel myself to be all there, then I have no fear of doubt and am quite sure. Thus, the more *concretely—i.e.*, as one whole—my mind reacts, the more positive am I, whether right

or wrong. Lack of this concreteness shows itself in hesitation without definite grounds, and more sadly in regret after the deed is done, when reasons against it come too late to mind. The concrete mind may also hesitate—must hesitate when contrary reasons present themselves, for and against, in almost equal force. But it hesitates on definite grounds — it "knows its own mind" — and has the best chance of reaching a decision in accordance with its own whole nature. Concreteness, then —the tendency to react as a whole, is—if not *the* cause of positiveness, at any rate an auxiliary cause maintaining it. And concreteness of nature is facility of consciousness from a different point of view, since if all parts of a nature come into action on slight stimulus, they will tend to come into action all together—*i.e.*, to mobilize swiftly—in accordance with any objective demand made upon them. All that is relevant begins to turn up at once. All the cognate mental processes are in operation together.

Presently, it will be our task to follow out the consequences of this central quality, in the recognition of which as conformable with observed fact the evidence for the existence of the quality consists. We infer the symptoms from the property, and look to see whether these are our Gaelic Irishman's symptoms. If they are and there is no better hypothesis, this one stands till a better is found. If it stands there still remains the problem of the ultimate physical and psychical fact to which it corresponds in the psycho-physical life. The psychological investigator, or school of investigators, who discover the solution of this problem will doubtless make other valuable discoveries on the road. They will also discover some much more accurate statement in popular language of the broad truth that is set forth in these pages.

The incidents of life, as perceived by a rapidly moving, closely knit nature, must necessarily produce more disturbance of self-consciousness than the same incidents acting

on one less susceptible. But an alteration in self-consciousness is an emotion, and so we might expect to find the Celt more emotional than the Teuton. This he is generally believed to be, some esteeming this liability to quick, strong emotion as a grace of nature, while in the eyes of others it is a defect. It may, indeed, be either, but this does not concern us now. Carleton had made his readers familiar with that liability to extraordinarily rapid transitions of emotion which characterized the merry peasantry of his day to an extent that lends itself to grotesque description. And Mr. Villiers Stanford has made skilful use of the same characteristic in his opera of *Shamus O'Brien*.

To-day, with an advance in the habit of self-control, it often takes another form. The Irishman, whatever his mood, is conscious or semi-conscious of other moods hanging about him; hence arises a suggestion of incongruity which, without destroying the balance of his central mood, clothes his ideas generally in a

subtle veil of humour. It follows that the Gael is seldom moody—*i.e.*, under the *dominance* of one mere mood for long. He must be hard pressed indeed before he commits suicide or becomes mad. As a matter of fact, there is a less percentage of lunacy in Connaught than in the more anglicized provinces of Munster and Leinster.

Again, a nature thus endowed is so many other things besides its actual self, not merely *in posse*, and yet not quite *in esse*, that other more or less distinct varieties of humanity become easily intelligible to it. The manifestations of another person's state of mind moves all the potentialities that resemble it in a mind so readily moved. This is sympathy, and the perfection of the sympathy depends on the exactness of the correspondence between the actual state of mind in one and the imagination of it through the awakened possibilities of the other. The more breadth and variety of human nature a person has the better equipped is he for sympathy with others—

now through one side of his nature, now through another. But, with average capacity, the effect of greater variety obviously follows in the case of a person whose possibilities of thought, instinct, and mood are apt to become real on the slighter stimulus. It is often supposed that we can only sympathize with that which we have already experienced, and this would be true if the manifestations of another's state were always insufficient to awaken *for the first time*—*i.e.*, out of the potential—similar states in us. This universal negative is by no means true. Even for stolid natures it is not altogether true, as, for instance, when one is deeply moved by absorbing affection for another. Much less is it for those of the susceptible type. Thus, starting once more from the central characteristic under discussion, we find ourselves again in the light of an established fact—*i.e.*, the Celtic gift of accurately imaginative sympathy. It is not that the Celt is kinder than another. The English and the Germans are quite as kind when they

become aware of another. The Germans are the sentimentalists of Europe. The Englishman has an affectionate nature. It is that the Celt's kindness is so much more skilful. His sympathy fits you like a glove. He seems to have a miraculous insight into your wants.

As to his spirituality, a word will suffice. It is obvious that a vivid inner life must make the materialistic estimate of life's conditions seem ridiculous. The more a man tingles with conscious life through all his being the less will he be moved by the thought of mere possessions. This, of course, will make him appear as unpractical from the money-maker's point of view. It may also tend to make him, or her, careless as to the common creature comforts of order, neatness and punctuality, while keenly alive to the perhaps not less important creature advantages of having what one wants when and where one wants it rather than at the conventionally proper time and place.

Probably all healthy human nature has a

capacity to complete itself as a rational whole; and completeness, actual or potential, implies the capacity to become "all things to all men," in the sense of sympathy. But without a high degree of facility in the potentiality to become the actual, the process might take an infinite time.

In other ways, as we shall see, facility of consciousness enters into the social gift, but at present let us be content to note the direct ability for instinctive sympathy which it confers.

Returning now to the effect of the central characteristic as concreteness of reaction, the peculiarities of the Celtic intelligence may be readily understood. Consciousness flashes out at many points at once. Perception, imagination, feeling, thought, all work together on the object of consciousness. Whatever the business in hand, the Celt *tends* to deal with it in a mood that is whole. Even when his business is abstract thought and so consists in concentration on one special aspect of his

world, as in mathematics, the ability for rapid concrete realization, in illustration or application of his thought, is not far removed. This characteristic shows in French mathematical and scientific education, and in Ireland also so far as there has been a chance. Abstract thought is, in fact, more attractive to average ability when there is behind it this readiness to break out into imagination. One form of mental action holds the field, but mobilization into another form is easy, should the process of thought or the guiding purpose require it. Imagination lies in wait on abstract thought, with all the eyes of the senses open, ready to dash in the colours of reality. Hence the gift of the Celt for illustration and his inventiveness. In his most absorbed moments his senses are still awake, eye and ear active in fancy and open to impression. He dreams indeed — dreams much — but the sense-life vibrates even through his dreamiest moments.

And in like manner, when his attention is concentrated on some object, in the attitude

that implies withdrawal from self-consciousness, the current of self-consciousness is still visible enough to colour the mood with delicate dashes of emotion. In short, the concrete intelligence owes its concreteness to the fact that it tends to be doing everything at once, and so changes swiftly when it changes. This habit, which might be a drawback—is a drawback often—becomes a gift when combined with boldness and vigour in special intellectual pursuits. The Celt has this vigour very generally; it is the positive quality in him; he is prone rather than otherwise to the speculative in philosophy and the abstract in science; his danger is that he will follow his idea with too much eagerness. Fanaticism is near him. Salvation lies for him in this concreteness of his intelligence. It is like a safety-belt to the over-confident swimmer; it brings him to the surface when his strength begins to fail. A concrete intelligence thus emboldens the thinker; it enables him to swim far and still keep the land within reach. The one

great philosopher of the ninth century, Johannus Scotus (Erigena), is a marvel for his times in boldness of speculation—the tremendous confidence of high fearless spirit and clear thought all aware of itself. Berkeley, of modern times, has the same Irish touch. Thinkers of this quality are afraid of nothing that thought may discover to them. They follow the cloud-veiled star of Truth by use of the compass of reason within them. Who knows what such minds may not in the future do for the development of that ancient Christian Church to which the Irish Celt for the most part belongs.

The value of concreteness is more specially obvious (1) in all the practice of social life, and (2) in the literary exposition of thought. I hope to deal with these subjects at greater length presently, and will only touch on them briefly here. Celtic accessibility to ideas is a familiar fact, and obviously pertains to that concrete mind which finds hints of most things readily in itself. The ability of a Celtic group

to adopt a common standpoint, notwithstanding great diversity, has been abundantly tested, and comes of the ease with which each mind effects transformation of thought in face of a common motive. An Irish crowd mobilizes with strange swiftness, and Irish politicians can co-operate unexpectedly with a rapidity embarrassing to Governments. This is because each is quicker in awakening his intelligence to reach at least the horizon of his own experience.

Every one has heard, too, of the Gaelic gift for intuitive social insight—that power of imagining the mind of another which multiplies a hundredfold the capacity for direct sympathy —of its quickness to seize the central facts of a situation and marshal them all, and of the tact implied in these powers. Such gifts make the Gael effective in society and politics, influential to lead, able to administrate, popular in rule, conciliatory in diplomacy. It is a common saying that, so far in each case as his abilities otherwise go, he is all this, and

we may take it as confirmatory of our theory.

Ability to seize the central facts of a situation is the same as that ability for marshalling ideas in the most telling order, which might be called the gift for expounding an argument or telling a story in due perspective. In this respect the Celt is instinctively an artist, and it is in the wholeness of his view that the explanation seems to lie.

Thus, when all the points come to mind in swift and orderly procession, the marshalling process takes place under the circumstances most favourable for producing effect. The most pregnant points in an argument stand out to the concrete intelligence as such, and so they naturally take the most prominent place in the exposition. The more vividly, too, the mind of the hearer is conceived, the more effectual is the instinct to place the matter before him so that he sees it as we see it in our own minds. The contrast to this is the procedure of the mind that moves literally always

step by step, climbing the mountain without seeing the view—a common thing enough. Such a one may produce the closest, most convincing argument, beginning at any point that is logically suitable, and yet leave his hearer without any single clear conception of a whole. The reason is that his habit of treating his points as a *series* of separate though connected units prevails to the extent of short-sightedness, so that he does not see the whole as a simultaneous whole, and thus its true genesis in thought is hidden from him. So in exposition he begins wherever he happens to be, or wherever he happened to begin himself. To begin well is to arrest the attention at once, to strike the imagination, or engage the intellect. The point in which interest naturally centres should come first. This condition of effectiveness is instinctively secured when he who expounds sees his subject all at once.

The superiority of the French to the German in these respects is explained by the Celtic

infusion.[1] We need not pause here to apply the same idea to literature other than logical exposition. All literature *is* expression—the exposition of story, of fancy, of thought—and it is the most essential requisite of good literature that the thing to be said should be said so that in the mind of the hearer it is the thing it was meant to be.

Therein lies, therefore, as I would suggest, the first explanation of the acknowledged literary excellence of the Celtic peoples. Their gift of speech and literature, however, is wider than this instinctive aptness for effective exposition in order. It includes command of words, an ear controlling all speech with its demand for rhythm, an eye stamping all thought with the forms of the pictorial imagination. With these forms of imagination, the arrows of thought are pointed and made to pierce the mind. The Irish orator, the Irish writer, is fluent, musical, graphic; he engages the eye, delights the ear, and strikes the

[1] See Chapter VI.

imagination at least as much as he takes possession of the intelligence. Also, and for the same reason, he moves the mind to feeling, and thus further wins it to his theme.

And the explanation of these gifts lies ready to hand; it is still the same central characteristic. He deals with his literary matter concretely. When he thinks he does not altogether cease to imagine in sight and sound, nor does he cease to feel. Thought is in the focus of consciousness, and in the wide room around it the life of the senses and self-consciousness wait, silent but alert and industrious. The more intensely his thought is concentrated the more does all his intellectual and emotional being react with it, not, however, to distract but to support. Hence the music of his periods, the vitality of his illustrations, the brightness of atmosphere, the high spirits and personality expressed at every turn. Consider this last trait of "personality." The Gael is not only lucid and brilliant, he has, above all things, a personal style, *he* is there

in his book; you can almost nod approval to him across the table as you read. And the reason is that he—he himself in all the vitality of an active emotional soul—really was there while he wrote. He did not first turn *himself* out of doors that his intellect might work without distraction. Perhaps, too, he had you, the reader, to be talked at and moved in his mind as he wrote, on the other side of the table. And so in his writing all this multiform activity of his comes out; he has a personal style, a thing most delightful when instinctive and the personality refined, most hateful when affected. The real thing and the imitation may be seen by any one any day in the evening newspapers. But a philosopher, as well as a journalist, can talk across the printed page.

The object of this chapter has been to sketch in outline a theory of Celtic character capable of explaining those qualities commonly observed in average Irish human nature as based, not exclusively but generally, on a

variation from Teutonic standards in the readiness, and hence the concreteness, of psychological reaction. If the facts have been correctly stated, and the inferences are sound, then it may be claimed that something has been done to establish the position that "the lightning genius of the Gael" is the central fact in the development of our racial character; that it is probably based on a well-marked difference of physical constitution, and that it is multiform in the variety of characteristics to which it gives rise.

One other fact is worthy of mention. We need certainly not be surprised, yet we are almost startled to find, that the Celtic quality of whole-natured lift and swing in psychical matters is reflected into a corresponding physical quality, as shown in the records of international athletic contests. So at least it would appear from the character of the names considered racially of the world's "champions," which are published up to date year by year in Whitaker's Almanack. In all contests that

require sudden effort—high jump, long jump, throwing the weight, and putting the hammer —Irish names hold the field by a strong majority against the world almost all the time.[1] In other contests they merely maintain their place. Here we have in another form concentration of energy in a single effort— " Aufschwung," as the Germans call it in their expressive tongue.

The " lightning genius," in its generic form as facility of concrete psycho-physical life, is by no means limited to the Irish Gael and his Scottish brother. It is an element in the greatness of France. It is obvious and delightful in Wales. It colours all the English Celtic fringe. It is the essential Celtic quality in that more complex creation, the Genius of the Gael, which is expounded in these pages.

[1] The names are Irish Celtic names, not Scotch or Welsh or Anglo-Irish. Also it should be noted that the nationality of the record-breakers, as shown by reference to the lists at various times, is even more striking than that of the record-holders at any one time.

III

THE SOCIAL GENIUS OF THE GAEL

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

COLERIDGE.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL GENIUS OF THE GAEL

EVEN unsympathetic observers agree that the Western Irish are a sociable people with gracious ways, swift to quarrel on occasion, it maybe, but with well-marked social gifts, quick to forgive, faithful to their pledges, loyal in affection, genial comrades, and honourable foes. The Irish soldiers in the Boer War fought for a cause with which they had no sympathy, and there was no enthusiastic popular welcome for them afterwards in the streets of Dublin. But they were pledged as soldiers of the British Crown, and excelled all others in achievement won by extreme self-devotion to their colours. The Dublin Nationalists, in strong disapproval of the war,

could not give them greeting on their home return: we may be sure they did not fail to note the brave and honourable action of these simple soldier heroes, whose prowess, as the story goes, so moved the veteran Queen that she paid her last visit to Dublin partly with a view to visiting the districts whence they came.

Here we see the old Irish spirit of honour and knightly faith—adherence to the vows—the *gesa* which the champion has taken on himself [1]—adherence not in the letter only but to the utmost limits of the spirit. Irish history throughout abounds in examples of personal faith, personal loyalty, touching, persistent, devoted. Vows are sacred, responsibilities binding. Love given is given, and due to last. These things lie deeper than conscience: they are rooted in primitive personality, the self-respect which is honour, the respect for others which is faith.

[1] There would, of course, be nothing beyond common soldierly duty to note in this incident were it not for the abnormal character and quantity of the duty which the Dublin Fusiliers took upon them in the war.

There are bad Irishmen, who are the contrary of all that is described in these pages. An anti-social Irishman is perhaps the most degraded of human beings morally. Having had the main features of social humanity stamped more emphatically upon him, his denial of his own social nature undermines the more surely his moral being. He has cut himself adrift from his natural moorings, and the currents of selfish opportunity carry him away. Such were the ignoble band of spies, informers, and *agents provocateurs*.

A " decent "—not to say good—Irishman is, first of all, instinctively faithful in his personal affections. The son, or daughter, who prospers in America never forgets the old people at home, and seldom fails to accept responsibility on behalf of brothers and sisters in need of money for emigration. As for the peasant farmer at home, he could if he tried hardly separate the idea of his welfare from that of " Herself " and the children. This is instinct, not just sheer sense of duty. The roots of his

faithfulness reach down as deep as his primal egoism, inextricably mixed with which, and ever present with him, is his sympathetic consciousness of those others who form the circle of home. Sympathy is not the product of civilization in him. It is awake with the first breath of his untutored self-consciousness, and it keeps awake. When he opens his eyes on the consciousness of self, the consciousness of these others with whom he lives and grows is present with him. And this other-consciousness towards human beings generally, and even towards animals, grows with his growth, and develops, so far as not checked by circumstances, in all normal life relations. "Every man has his own feelings," and these imagined feelings are to be considered in each case.

This is the *key to the Irishman's social nature:* he is *other-conscious as a matter of course*. We have already seen how this is a necessary manifestation of the concrete Celtic mind. Here it is rather our business to note

it as a fact and to trace its developments—the harmonies and discords to which it gives rise.

The Irish domestic virtues—*kindness, faithfulness, mutual trust*—form the first and sweetest of its fruits. Side by side may be placed the virtue of *loyalty* in all its manifestations. The other-conscious man is naturally loyal because the other man's hurt hurts him. We think of loyalty more especially in relation to friends, but it applies to strangers and even enemies as well. Its psychological cause is the consciousness of the other man's mind. Sometimes, it is the sense of what the other man expects from us and our impulse to live up to that as we would to an idea of our own welfare. It is the motive force of the other man's idea in us. Other-consciousness makes us feel acutely the stranger's loneliness and longing for the kind word which instinctively we give him. In this guise it is *hospitality*—a very large and branching virtue in the view of a reflective spectator, but perfectly simple in all its variety as understood

by the intuitive sympathy of the Irish peasant. In defect of other-consciousness, a code of rules for hospitable service is needed.

> Thou shalt entertain the guest in proportion to his need.
>
> Thou shalt treat him with honour whatever his estate.
>
> Thou shalt not whisper or speak in a language unknown to him in his presence.
>
> Thou shalt entertain him with speech and music, or leave him in peace, as it seemeth to thee it shall please him best, and thou shalt study his wishes in this and other respects with care.

But other-consciousness is better than a code. The ignorant peasant is often perfectly well-bred, because intuitive insight aims straighter than reflection. And this Celtic gift of breeding is peculiarly marked towards strangers : the social tastes of the Irish peasant fill him with concern for the loneliness of the stranger, thereby quickening the activity of his natural tact. Thus, as faithfulness in affection is an inbred virtue, so hospitality comes to him with ready grace. This ready grace of good breeding co-inheres with a

certain natural grace of high breeding also. The courteous Irish peasant woman is not easily fluttered by the discovery that she has, unawares, been simply gracious to the great ones of the world. At Leenane, in Connemara, King Edward is said to have had an experience which was probably after his own heart in this respect. He strolled into a cottage unattended. He was invited to sit down and the best chair placed for him with the usual polite ceremony. "It was a great man that sat last on that chair," said the mistress of the house. "It was the Lord-Lieutenant himself the last time he was in these parts." King Edward was too kind and too dignified to leave her in ignorance. "But I am the King," said he. "Are you, indeed?" said she. "Well, you're very welcome to my house."

It is said that there is a dark side to this readiness of goodwill. For instance, it is alleged that the Irish peasant, meeting a stranger on the road, reports the distance at less than its length to keep up the "poor man's

heart." There is, or was, probably some truth in this allegation, but, as my experience goes, not so much. It seems to be in the Ireland of the Pale that incidents of this sort chiefly occur; and the farther west one goes the more accurate are the answers which the peasants give, though flanked often by words of encouragement or compliment. I once cycled across Ireland from east to west and back again, and in that ride discovered, as a perfectly new idea to me, this superior veracity of the Celtic Irish.[1] In Meath it was almost impossible to get an answer to any question, so intent was every one on saying things agreeable. I had taken shelter from a shower under a hospitable Meath hedge. A carman, with full freight, came along and sheltered his charge under a neighbouring tree. "How far is it to Kells?" I called out. "Ah! it's only a bit of a shower," said he. "But how many miles is it to Kells?" I again essayed. "Sure

[1] I have tested it since. Veracity is altogether much on the increase.

you're quite safe there, and the rain won't last," was his relevant reply. "But can't you tell me how far it is to Kells?" "Sure, the sun'll be out in a minute," said he. And I gave it up. I don't think he was deaf. He was fairly young and clearly gallant, and he was only a few degrees more irrelevant than others of whom I made inquiries between Dublin and Kells.

But in the uplands of Cavan the style changed. There was a high wind. "Will the wind be against me on that road?" I asked. "It will, indeed," was the reply, "but sure you're strong." In the west my informants took great pains to give me accurate information about distances and hills and weather, eking out hard facts with some happy phrase of encouragement. "Do you think this rain will last?" I asked a Donegal peasant. "I doubt it will," says he, "but, maybe, it wouldn't be wetting you much all the time." And he turned out to be right as well as truthful.

The cause of this difference between east and west lies probably in the unconscious caricature of Celtic breeding made by the imitative effort of a less nimble wit. The Anglo-Irishman, when he is true to himself, is a dignified and charming person enough, but at some stage in the evolution of a commonplace Anglo-Irish family [1] there is apt to be much tomfoolery and play-acting in clumsy imitation of the Hibernian model.

Still, it may be admitted that perhaps there is in the model something corresponding to this feature which is more marked in the imitation. Immediate sympathy may be in the average Celt stronger than instinctive truthfulness. And so we may have kindly meant lies intended to give some immediate pleasure; and sometimes — not, I think, generally—the net result is injury in the long run.

The inference as to character may be easily overstated, though the lesson as to ethical duty

[1] I am only Anglo-Irish myself, so far as I know.

cannot be enforced too much. In Celtic uncultured nature the instinct to give pleasure perhaps has the upper hand of the instinct to tell truth. The self-centred man is more easily truthful because he is unconscious of any state of mind except his own. The slow-thinking, unimaginative man is easily truthful because nothing but the experienced fact comes into his head. Such a one is good for telling truth, bad for keeping faith with the secrets of a friend. Still he has advantages. On the other hand, instinctive truthfulness has many rivals in the mobile Celtic mind. Instinctive sympathy uncontrolled is the first, after which the whole imaginative brood rush in with haste to confuse the judgment and suspend that instinct by which the truth declares itself. My mother had an Irish maid, a delightful, witty person of the vivid Celtic type. A man called at the back door to solicit custom for some particular brewery. "Sure we're all teetotallers here," said the maid on the instant. My mother happened to overhear the colloquy.

" What did you say that for, Kate," said she, " when you know it wasn't true? " " Ah, 'twas the readiest thing to say," said the girl. It was the shortest cut, no doubt, and saved all explanations. Also it had a kind of truth, so far as the beer was concerned, and the maids were teetotallers. This girl would never have told a mischievous lie or a misleading one.

But all this does not make truth one whit less necessary. On the contrary, it emphasizes her claim for our punctilious service. If the instinct to truth be not strengthened from the first so as to hold its own, not only against the instinct of self-defence, but against immediate sympathy also and the overflowing suggestions of imagination, then by continued overthrow, time after time, it becomes weaker till it cannot be counted on even as against the most ignoble impulses of fear, spite, jealousy, and unmeasured party spirit.

The practical inference is obvious enough. The clear Celtic intellect is favourable to the

intentional development of the great intellectual virtue. In spite of his springing fancy, the Celt's sense of reality is uncommonly vivid, and his very imaginativeness helps him to appreciate the far-reaching beneficence of truth when he gives it a thought. It goes, moreover, with the close-knit character of his nature that the ideal of truth, once established in mind, should effectually govern the whole of conduct. The truthfulness that reposes on the ideal of good, as a whole, is the soundest and safest truthfulness; and of this the idealizing Celt is peculiarly capable. It is when one instinctive virtue fights another that there is the greatest danger of moral chaos, because then the triumphant instinct is apt to enthrone itself in the seat of conscience. Rear up into the light of the Ideal, therefore, this instinct to truth so that it may not be overshadowed, even though, in the nature of things, the rival instinct to immediate sympathy may sometimes tower above it.

All education as such tends to this end. The

more cultivated mind is the more trained to intellectual honesty. Moreover, wider views of life show—and make the consciousness more daily present with us—that the ends of a more far-sighted sympathy are not hindered, but helped, by truthfulness on all occasions of social intercourse.

But enough of this digression—I apologize for the apology, suspecting, as I do, that the Saxon, though in a different way, needs it as much as the Celt. The snare to the Saxon is his pre-occupation, his less vivid sense, and his liability to onesidedness of view. He lies, when he lies, out of an intellectual confusion which he has not the strenuous conscience to clear up. He thinks himself more truthful than he will take the trouble to be. The Celt lies from excess of tact, the Saxon from defect of care. In both cases I speak, not of the deliberate, but of the instinctive lie.

Irishmen, like Frenchmen, are frequently accused of a tendency to be what is called dramatic. By this it is, I think, meant that

they tend to do the thing under any set of circumstances most appropriate to the occasion, rather than that which expresses their own view with the most perfect sincerity. So far as there is any truth in this charge, the defect implied is a more refined form of that which has just been discussed. If I say what is most fitting rather than what I think—if I do the act which completes the drama rather than the act which I mean and will stand by —then I do so because my instinct to work up an immediate objective effect predominates over my consciousness of permanent feelings and purposes in myself. Herein consists the tendency to live and act in relation to some object of feeling and apprehension outside self, which is a generalization of other-consciousness on one of its sides. The cause is a powerful objective imagination which sees the total object as it ought to be and tends to complete it. The complaisant peasant who tells you what you would like to hear is working similarly, but with a simpler object of imagination—one other man's immediate state of mind.

To be dramatic within measure is obviously not a fault. The act in accordance with the circumstances is clearly the right act viewed objectively. To be dramatic is right, provided we are also sincere—true to our permanent self as it will be after the act is done. The hypocrite deliberately feigns a character: the dramatic nature does not feign, but is for the time so absorbed in the object as to be carried out of a self to which he afterwards returns. Clearly there is much that is good in this: the objection lies in the false expectations of character which it occasions. In the dramatic phase feelings are expressed which have no permanent existence, intentions stated or expectations raised which will not be carried out. All this is evil, and must not be confused with the beneficence of an isolated good act which is the one appropriate to the circumstances.

The objectivity and concreteness of Celtic nature makes it capable of dramatic action, but there appears to be no evidence in Celtic

regions of any great liability to serious error here.[1] Such error in the normal type is sufficiently guarded against by the quality of intense and positive personality already noticed. An Irishman is easily carried out of himself in the sense of forgetting self in his absorption in the object before him: but he is the last man in the world to be carried out of himself in the sense of ceasing to be the man that he normally is. By his objectivity he is averse to egoism. By his vivid personality he is eminently sincere. A close-knit mind is all present with itself at all times—ay, even in moments of tempestuous passion—and if a new set of circumstances make it act in new and unexpected ways, it will in all probability be found to have developed by the act its inner nature along those new and unexpected lines.

In the conflict between the consciousness of objective and of subjective fitness much

[1] The French is too mixed a race to take in evidence of Celtic proclivities which are not shown by Gael or Cymri; and the stagey Irishman is mostly Anglo-Irish.

of the occasion for Irish humour arises. This is the Celtic touch so markedly missing in Parisian crowds.

Nevertheless, it remains that the passionateness of an easily moved nature, however close knit, lays it open to that partial activity which is the negative characteristic of the over-dramatic mind. The actor, like a man in a passion, wraps himself up in a part of himself—the part brought into play by the circumstances. If, therefore, the Celtic nature loses balance so as to allow its passionateness to get the better of its allied concreteness, then it will tend to be merely dramatic in its objective, as well as merely passionate in its subjective, moods.

Many varieties of type it is found to yield, but the central type is what concerns us specially. All other types branch from it by some defect, the essential remedy for which is to be found in the central racial character. A slight reminder of some forgotten fact will check the true Celt in a passion, the least hint

of his real nature will restore him to sincerity in his most stagey mood. It takes but few words also to remind him of his manners.

Bicycling from Dooghert in the island of Achill to the ferry on Blacksod Bay I met a boy at the cross-roads and asked, "Is this the road to the ferry?" "Give me a penny and I'll tell you," said the boy. I felt sure that it was the road, but this surprising answer brought me down from my wheel to admonish the boy.

"It's ashamed of you I am," said I, "and glad that there wasn't an English lady with me this day to hear you say a thing like that. And you an Irish boy! Don't you know that Irishmen are famed throughout the world for their good manners, and especially their politeness to ladies?"

There was a very brief pause. "Thank you, ma'am," said the boy, "and that is the way to the ferry."

As an isolated instance this would have little significance. I give it as characteristic:

swift and early return to good manners after error is what one expects and generally gets from the roughest boy out West.

Sociable to strangers, loyal to comrades, affectionate and faithful to family and friends —such all the world over the Irishman is admitted to be. Our hypothesis as to Celtic character supplies the clue. Concreteness of self-consciousness implies a certain continuous self-consistency throughout all changes which makes a man keep faith with himself as a matter of course. Thus sensitive personal honour shows itself as the controlling action of the whole nature on the variant partial manifestations in which it temporarily expresses itself. On the other hand, the Gael's mobility of mind and awareness of other minds leaves him open on all sides to the social appeal. Hence these familiar traits, which appear to have characterized the race throughout its history, seeing how large a part they play in ancient Gaelic story no less than in the tradition and practice of to-day.

In particular, the home of the Irish peasant is, and no doubt long has been, a place sacred to tender affections, mutual respect, and delicate courtesies. Each link within the home is a bond that lasts. Marriage above all is a veritable sacrament, and that not by ecclesiastical prescription only, but in its essential nature, as these people feel it to be, a solemn self-dedication of each to the other, a free unconditional gift. This is the unique social bond, unique in its nature because it implies so much: but something of the same sacredness attaches to all bonds that have been entered into willingly. This may be inconvenient; the inconvenience is a trouble inherent in the life of those who have the faithful temperament: the benefit is for those who are associated with them. As regards marriage, it is worthy of note that there is not, and never was, from one end of Ireland to the other, any demand for the institution of a divorce court, nor any effective interest in the problems it suggests.

The Irish pair make their choice and keep it. Is there anything distinctive in their manner of making it—their courtship? What sort of lover in particular does an Irishman make? We know that in the Irish farmer's house the marriage of the eldest son is matter for close consideration in the first instance by the seniors, and for shrewd negotiations as to financial prospects on the one hand and dowry on the other between the fathers of the young people concerned.[1] We appear to have the *mariage de convenance* as in France. Irish fathers, however, are frequently well endowed, and Irish mothers even more so, with a wise imagination and kindly common sense that enables them to enter into the views shyly held, or likely to be held, by the boy and girl themselves. If the father on the one side sees the girl, and the mother on the

[1] See *My Irish Year*, Padraic Colum. The younger daughter for whom there is no dowry forthcoming has her remedy in these days by emigration to America, where she can earn it for herself, and return if she will, to become the centre of an Irish home.

other side sees the boy, out of eyes enlightened by sympathy with youth and intimate affection, the choice may to all intents and purposes be made—as it certainly is often made—by the youthful pair themselves. That the courtship will, as a rule, be conducted with delaying shyness and delicate reserve goes without saying. Such is the custom of the country. The courtship of young Irish lovers is a dainty thing, fraught in great part of the tender imaginative stuff that poetry is made of, romantic rather than passionate, more adoring than possessive, even though expressed in the homely ways of homely souls. In every grade of Irish society the Irishman, as a lover, tends to the type that shows appreciation by an outburst of chivalrous service and by a general exaltation of mental life. The passion of attachment to the one beloved is diffused as a radiance throughout the whole being, stimulating the higher senses and uplifting their activity to the higher levels of idealizing life. This is what we might expect from the Celtic

temperament, with its inevitable upgrowth of ideas under stimulus, its bent towards the development of chastening intellectual — nay, spiritual — influences when aroused. This is what we might expect as a consequence of the central Celtic quality described in these pages, and I think I am correct in saying that it is what we find.

Of a piece with this is the Irishman's traditional attitude to women in general. It is an attitude perfectly well known in other lands, but in Ireland it pervades all circles of society. Its point of departure is the assumption of equality in rights of thought and speech; and this opens the door to free intellectual converse, good talk, sincere discussion, and wholesome comradeship, so far as the friendship goes. This talent for equality is a very agreeable Irish characteristic, and women will notice that they benefit by it for the most part whatever their age and irrespective almost of their appearance. This last is a quality which I have not been able to notice in any other

considerable group to anything like the same extent. The second point about the Irishman is that, having set out to treat his woman-friend on this basis of an equal and similar human nature, he proceeds to exceed the conventional normal in the way of conferring upon her in addition all the little privileges and services he can think of; whether as due from the greater in physical strength to the less, or out of the depths of some primal instinct, or for the mere pleasure of the thing, does not appear. Thus in friendliness with women he, on the average, excels in the modern quality of mind-to-mind companionship and also in the old-fashioned grace of chivalrous courtesy.

His quick wit serves him well in both these capacities. I was crossing a muddy street in Dublin laden with books and an insecurely held umbrella. To my dismay the umbrella fell plump into a mass of mud. My hands were full, but, before I had time to realize my helplessness, the umbrella was rescued and

a well-dressed youth stood before me with it in one hand and his clean pocket-handkerchief wiping it in the other. "I hope that won't spoil your dress now," he said, presenting it with a charming smile. The umbrella was clean, the handkerchief muddy.

Good manners from boys to women and girls are taught in every Irish peasant home. I have seen this exemplified again and again. There is no idea current in the family that the girl has less value in any way than the boy. This may be due in part to the intense realization of practical essentials in the Christianity of these people, and in part to the heritage of old custom and ideals handed down by tradition and partly preserved by actual literature from Gaelic times. Both these influences are working to this end, I believe, and reinforce the social Celtic temperament, which is itself involved in their existence. Gaelic story and the ancient Irish law-tracts show that in early Ireland, pagan as well as Christian, the position of women was good. Indeed, one might

almost say that the social spirit in this regard appears to have had just the same characteristic marks then as it displays now.[1]

[1] The equal rights of the two parties in marriage, for instance, is plainly laid down by the Brehon law. In the marriage of equal rank, when the wealth and social position of the two are such as to make them social equals, the law declares that "what each gives the other is equally forfeited," her wealth to him as much and no more than his to her. On this principle it is decreed that "a contract made by either party is not a lawful contract without the consent of the other, except in case of contracts tending equally to the welfare of both." In the marriage of unequal rank the two parties have status and rights proportionate to their property. The man supported by the woman's wealth is on the same footing as the woman supported by the man's. After describing the rules for the latter case the writer of the law-tract turns to the former with the simple opening statement that in this case "*the man goes in the place of the woman and the woman in the place of the man.*"

Even the law-writer, however, is not prosaic. Behind this abstract equality he sees romantic contrasts in the ideal, which he betrays naïvely in the derivations given of the Irish words for woman, "ban," and for man, "fer." "Thus they are called," he says, "from the *kindliness* of a woman, and the *dignity* of a man, and *to reach these qualities they exist.*" (See "Law of Social Connections," in *Brehon Laws.*)

This old-age tradition of equality, courtesy, and mutual respect between men and women has an obvious bearing on the happy development of modern Irish love-stories when marriage has been reached. That the marriages, on the whole, are happy seems manifest in the facts. There are observers, however, who entertain grave doubts as to the effects of the system of marriage-choice among the farmers on the young Irishman's capacity for love-romance. We are told, too, that in parts of Scotland the phrase " as loveless as an Irishman " has passed into a proverb. If, however, we picture to ourselves the case of the Irish boy fresh from the careful training of his cottage home, a stranger in a land that to him is foreign, a simple boy, poor but by no means irresponsible, we may very well wonder whether " lovelessness " in such a case as this may not be anything more than ordinary uprightness of the most natural kind. Backwardness in love-making is indeed natural to those who are most disposed to be steadfast in love when made.

Those who are interested will do well to read Dr. Douglas Hyde's collection of *The Love Songs of Connacht* for sidelights on this elusive subject. These songs were all collected—just saved in time—from the Irish-speaking people of the West. They are therefore in Gaelic and suffer inevitably at the hands of even such a devoted scholar as Douglas Hyde. He gives them in his own skilful verse and also in prose for obvious reasons. Here is a verse which I cull almost at random as characteristic of the lover in his radiant mood :—

Dark Girl of the Valley, Dark Girl that is lovely,
Dark Girl that is radiant and tender,
Her throat and her brow like the swan in the sun
And her shapely form so slender.
Her hands shaped aright, with fingers soft white,
That Mary gave from above to her,
When my swan leaves her seat the sun loses his heat
And the moon does obeisance with love to her.

In the prose version the homely sense of the fancy-flight in the last two lines makes itself more keenly felt.

"When the swan goes out, the sun loses her heat, and the moon bows down with love to her."

This is not a mere fancy-flight: it is the adoring lover's experience of the way real things—the sun and the moon—affect him in presence of the beloved one.

Here is another song: it speaks for itself as an expression of tender and passionate grief. I give the literal prose version, as our interest here is in the experience rather than in the literature:—

The priests and the friars are every day in anger with me, for my being in love with thee, O maiden, and thou dead. I would protect thee from the wind and shelter thee from the rain, and the bitter melancholy of my heart it is, thee to be down beneath the ground.

When my people are certain that I am on my bed, it is on thy tomb that I do be stretched from nightfall until morning. Reasoning upon my hardship and bitterly lamenting, and sorely for my gentle courteous girl who was betrothed to me when a child.

Dost thou remember the night that thou and I were at the foot of the blackthorn-tree, and the night freezing hard? A hundred thanks to Jesus that we made not the spoiling and thy crown of maidenhood is now like a shaft of light (shining) before thee.

Here we see the poet in the man relieving the saddened lover's heart of him by that "imaginative strife" which, as Tennyson says, "diffused the shock through all the life, but in the present broke the blow." On the other hand, we hear in the unsophisticated love-songs of the Gael the joyous lover turned poet because heaven and earth and all life teem for him with delightful experiences that image forth his love. In one the coming of the girl he loves is like the advent of young summer. "She for whom the cuckoos call" is her description. Another describes her—thus, no doubt, he felt her—as light breaking through the common dimness of all else:—

I saw her coming towards me o'er the face of the mountain,
Like a star glimmering through the mist.

Again it is the gentle mind of the beloved and the rapid flight of her wit that is described:—

Her mind is a dove,
And the wit of my love
Is more supple and swift than a bird on the wing.

"These Irish bards," says Dr. Sigerson, "always placed beauty of mind above bodily beauty." And he notes as a simple example of this and other things the little poem called "Birds on a Bough." [1]

How pleasant for the small birds
To waken in the grove,
And close upon the same bough
To whisper to their love.
Not thus, alas! our fortune,
My very heart's delight:
'Tis far apart each morning
We waken to the light.

She's fairer than the lily,
Such beauty there is none:
She's sweeter than the violet,
More lightsome than the sun.
But better than all beauty
Her noble heart and free—
O God who art in heaven,
Remove this pain from me.

As an example of unsophisticated eloquence in a lover's appreciation of character

[1] *Bards of the Gael and Gall:* G. Sigerson, p. 337.

the last two lines of the following may be commended :—

It is Mary Haynes, the calm and easy woman,
Her beauty in her mind and in her face,
If a hundred clerks were gathered together
They could not write down a half of her ways.[1]

In the following we have sorrow again, the grief of the deserted lover pouring itself forth in delicate thought and vivid imagery, every item of which is *felt* ;—

The stars stand up in the air,
The sun and the moon are set,
The sea that ebbed dry of its tide
Leaves no single pebble wet ;
The cuckoo keeps saying each hour
That she, my storeen, is fled,—
O girl of the brave free tresses,
Far better had you struck me dead !

Three things have I learned through love,
Sorrow, and death, and pain,
My mind reminding me daily
I shall never see you again ;

[1] From a poem by Anthony Raftery, translated by Lady Gregory ; see *Poem Book of the Gael :* E. Hull, p. 323.

You left me no cure for my sickness,
Yet I pray, though my night be long,—
My sharp grief! and my heart is broken,—
That God may forgive your wrong.

She was sweeter than fiddle and lute,
Or the shining of grass through the dew,
She was soft as the blackbird's flute
When the light of the day is new;
From her feet on the lone hill-top
I have heard the honey dripping;
Why, girl, did you come to my door?
Or why could you not be stopping?[1]

The contributions from the side of the woman are fewer. As to their character it is, on the whole, true, as most critics imply, that they reveal a mind more absorbed in feeling. It should be observed, however, that this quality may belong to them because they chiefly deal with love in grief, and it should be remembered that the woman's loss when she loves is in the nature of things greater than the man's. She is harder hit in any case. It may be also that she has smaller store of reserve vitality, and so is less able to

[1] *Poem Book of the Gael*, E. Hull, pp. 316–17.

lift herself into that imaginative reaction in which the stronger swimmer finds relief. Here is a vision of despair :—

You have taken the East from me and you have taken the West,
You have taken the path before me and the path that is behind,
The moon has gone from me by night, and the sun by day;
Alas, I greatly dread that you have stolen my God away.

No way to turn, no light on earth, no refuge in the human soul. And at the end of the poem the bitter thought breaks out :—

That my heart is turned to stone what mattered that to you,
What were you caring for but to get a cow or two?

Best of all love-songs for human tenderness and spiritual passion is the old Gaelic song of the "Roisín Dubh," [1] on the ideas of which

[1] "Roisín Dubh" means the Little Dark Rose. "Ros Geal Dubh" means the Fair Dark Rose, used as a lover's name for Ireland during the Penal times.

Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen" was written. It is the Irishman's love-song to his immortal sweetheart, the Spirit of Ireland: it breathes the very essence of tender attachment and unlimited devotion as from the lover to his beloved in every age. Love and patriotism are commingled in it, each conferring an added spiritual dignity on the other. Here are four stanzas of it, culled from the beginning and the end:—

There's black grief on the plains and a mist on the hills;
There is fury on the mountain and that is no wonder;
I would empty the wild ocean with the shell of an egg,
If I could be at peace with thee, my Ros geal dubh.

. . . . .

There is true love in my heart for thee for the passing of a year,
Love tormenting, love lamenting, heavy love that wearies me,
Love that left me without health, without a path, gone all astray,
And for ever, ever, I did not get my Ros geal dubh!

I would walk Munster with thee and the winding ways of the hills,
In hope I would get your secret and a share of your love;

O fragrant Branch, I have known it that thou hast love for me,
The flower-blossom of wise women is my Ros geal dubh.

The sea will be red floods, and the skies like blood,
Blood-red in war the world will show on the ridges of the hills,
The mountain glens through Erin and the brown bogs will be quaking
Before the day she sinks in death, my Ros geal dubh.

IV

THE GAEL IN POLITICS

"There is no nation under the sun that doth love equal or indifferent justice more than the Irish; or will rest better satisfied with the execution thereof although it be against themselves."

SIR JOHN DAVIES (seventeenth century).

CHAPTER IV

THE GAEL IN POLITICS

For a long time it was the English fashion to believe that the Gaelic Irish had no capacity —not even a potential capacity—for self-government in any form. They were supposed to be afflicted with a political inefficiency, either mental or moral, and fit only to be guarded and ruled by a wiser and better folk. It was admitted in those days that the English government had been something of a failure, but it was stoutly maintained that Irish self-government would certainly be far worse. All this has been changed. In later days the sympathetic English visitor has returned from Ireland deeply impressed by the political intelligence, the civic sense, and the talent for

political organization shown by her people. And now, in this year of our Lord 1913, a man would have to be a blind and determined political opponent who ventured to assert that Irish political talent was below the average.

All this talk of political inability has in truth died out under pressure of hard facts. Mr. Balfour's Government, in 1898, gave local government on a democratic franchise to an Ireland quite untrained in the management of local affairs or representative institutions. It was a revolution. The common people—the despised Nationalists—came into power all over the country. Some mistakes, of course, were made, but they were few. It is generally admitted that the system worked well—amazingly well—from the first, and now, after fifteen years, few will be found to deny the fact.

Outside Ireland there was evidence enough in 1886—evidence in Great Britain, in the colonies, in the United States. Now it is overwhelming. Thus we hear from non-Irish

sources how the Irish, all over the States, take a leading part in political work and influence. The Democratic Party, with Free Trade programme now triumphant, depends much on their assistance; and their value in local administration is well recognized. I think it was at the Irish National Convention, 1912, that I heard Mr. John O'Callaghan say: "You might go to a town—say a Western town—in the United States and find 100,000 inhabitants, 10,000 of them being Irish. That 10,000 would be carrying on all the government of the place." I repeated this a few days afterwards to an American consul, not an Irishman, and asked for his impartial opinion. "Yes," he said, "that's the kind of thing all over the States."

Yet when Irish immigration on the large scale began in America, it was under circumstances as unfavourable in all respects as circumstances well could be. Without education, without means, exhausted often by the horrors of the voyage, these simple people adapted

for country life were cast on the quays, and struggled to get footing in the back streets of New York. In the United States, as in Great Britain, Protestant prejudice was bitterly against them in those old harsh days. There is one terrible story of a shipload of people who died practically on the New York quays, having been smitten by cholera during the voyage. Hundreds of infants and children survived, whose names no one knew. The Catholic priests took the matter in hand and found homes for the children in friendly households across the Canadian border. There they grew up as French Canadians. It was a nightmare time, and a bad start for those who survived and who now, in the second and third generations, are for the most part doing well. Special interest for our argument attaches to the fact that they have made for themselves so strong a place in the political system of the great Republic.

That political system was there before the beginning of the great immigration of the

nineteenth century. The immigrants of that date entered into it, with all its defects, for better and for worse: and they stand to-day for a great political influence, of which at least this much must be said, that it is steadily thrown time after time into the scales in favour of the claims of humanity as against those of the monopolists and other privilege-seeking classes. The present Prime Minister, Mr. Bryan, represents in this respect and others the race from which he springs.

Before the American Revolution, however, Ireland had sent a substantial contingent of citizens to the British Colonies in the New World. In the fight for American freedom, and afterwards in the framing of the Constitution, Irishmen played a worthy part. The first daily paper published in the United States, the *Pennsylvania Packet*, was issued by an Irishman. In the *Packet* office the Declaration of Independence was signed. Eight of the signatories of the Declaration were Irish, or of Irish descent. An Irishman, Colonel John

Nixon, first read it to the people. The first Governor of Pennsylvania after the adoption of the federal Constitution was a man from Dublin.[1]

Brigadier-General Owen, a Limerick man, received public thanks from Washington and Congress. Commodore John Barry, from Wexford, was Washington's commander-in-chief of the naval forces of the States.[2] After the conclusion of the war, moreover, the English Major-General in the House of Commons declared upon oath that half the rebel continental army was from Ireland.

Later, in the Civil War, there were Irishmen prominent on both sides—Generals Meade and Sheridan for North and South respectively. Of Presidents, note should be taken of President Jackson, a Protestant of Irish origin, who is said to have promised in 1825 the first thousand dollars to the Irish Catholic Emancipation Fund. To our own time belong the

[1] See *The Irishman in Canada*, Davies, pp. 59, 66.

[2] *Irish Nationality*, A. S. Green, pp. 180–1, 251.

name of President McKinlay, whose grand-uncle suffered death as a rebel outside the church of Coleraine and who has relatives living in Antrim to-day, and the name of Mr. Bryan, whose family settled in Virginia at an early date.[1]

The Irish in America have—so it is now generally admitted by Americans—a record of which any race might be proud. In particular it is not too much to say that they are the strongest vital force in politics. Turning now to Australasia, that " industrial Empire of unfederated labour nations," as Mr. Michael Davitt called it in 1898, we find the Irish in a position and with a record still more satisfactory. Alike up the country and in the towns, they are doing well: when they settle in a place and see their way, then home go letters with remittances and another member of the family comes out. So their number, already considerable, tends doubly to increase:

[1] *Irish-American History of the United States*, O'Hanlon, pp. 283, 650.

they settle well, maintain their religion, intermarry with each other for the most part, and form prosperous communities abounding in healthy happiness and dominated by the characteristic Irish turn of mind.[1]

Their position in politics may be briefly indicated by one quotation from Mr. J. F. Hogan's book on *The Irish in Australia*. It was written in 1887, but it is matter of common knowledge that the interval since then has been turned to good account. "In every colonial Parliament," he says, "Irishmen will be found distinguishing themselves as political leaders. . . . As a striking proof of the signal ability displayed by Irish leaders in Australia it is worthy of note that, since the inception of Parliamentary Government in the leading colony, Victoria, all the Speakers of the Legislative Assembly have hitherto, without exception, been Irishmen — Murphy, MacMahon, Gavan Duffy, Lalor." And that these four

[1] *Life and Progress in Australasia*, Michael Davitt, p. 97 for an example.

were chosen solely on their merits appears from the fact that " in every case the majority of the Assembly was composed of English and Scotch representatives." [1] The Irish population at that time in Victoria was about 180,000, one-fifth of the whole.

There is more to say even in this brief summary about Victoria, but in the history of the subject New South Wales comes first. As far back as the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, thousands of Irish peasants were transported beyond the seas for the political crime of belonging to illegal bodies in opposition to tithes and other social grievances. In some of the early shipments to Botany Bay there was among the convicts a leaven of " these humble Irish reformers who helped to lay the foundations of Sydney." Sir Roger Therry in his *History of New South Wales* bears witness to the after-growth and prosperity of the Irish element. About half a century later,

[2] *The Irish in Australia*, J. F. Hogan, p. 12.

when the colony had grown up, it was high time for the establishment of a Home Rule Constitution. Two groups stand out from the crowd as specially interested in this matter : the group of exiled British Chartists and the group of Irish Australians descended from the rebels. Two men are conspicuous : Parkes, a Chartist, a thorough Radical in the English sense, and William Charles Wentworth, an Irish Australian, whose services to the colony in the cause of self-government won for him the title of " the Australian Patriot." Other noted Irish names there are in the early record of the emancipated colony : Sir John O'Shaughnessey (twice Premier), Sir William Bourke (Governor), Plunket, Wilson Gray.

The next step in the development of self-government was taken when the southern portion of the colony, under the name of Victoria, divided from New South Wales and set up a political constitution for itself. Four eminent Irishmen took an active part in this business, Sir W. F. Stawell, afterwards Chief

Justice and later Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, Sir Redmond Barry, subsequently Judge of the Supreme Court, Sir F. Murphy, for many years Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and Sir John O'Shanassy, conspicuous for his unique services on the committee that drafted the Constitution. He it was who became the first Premier and held that office in three successive Governments.

We have already seen how Sir F. Murphy, the first Speaker of the Victorian Parliament, was succeeded by three other Irishmen in succession. One of these, Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, famous among Irishmen as editor of the *Nation* in the "Young Ireland" days, came to Melbourne in 1856. He was greeted with enthusiasm by the Irish community, who subscribed £5,000 in order to be ready for him with the gift of an estate, to qualify him for entry on election into the Legislative Assembly. He joined the Ministry of Sir John O'Shanassy, and succeeded him as Prime Minister in 1871. At a later date he became

Speaker. Sir Bryen O'Loghlen, of County Clare, made the third Irish Prime Minister in 1881.

Ireland deserves well of Australia, most of all for the part which the Irish played in helping to lay the foundations of her political system. It is good to know, however, that they keep their place in the front rank, and, better still, are popular and respected in all ranks of public service. It is interesting, too, to note that the ancient Orange feud, rampant though it once was when the representative Catholic Irishmen came to the front in the infant colony of Victoria, has quite died out. The present Speaker of the South Australian Parliament, Mr. O'Loughlin, at the Irish National Banquet in London, 1913, referring incidentally to the talk about religious trouble in Ireland, said it was all a myth. Religious differences were the last thing they thought of in Australia. Not a fifth of the people in the district he represented were Irish. The Orangemen voted for him the same as the

Catholics did. Nor is this because either has become indifferent to religion.

Of West Australia, South Australia, and Queensland a similar tale might be told. Mr. W. Redmond is amply justified by the facts for the general statement incidentally made in the course of his interesting book *Through the New Commonwealth*. "Australia," he says, "has been largely moulded by Irishmen, and Irish names are honourably connected with every phase of Australian life." In Australia, as a whole, about one quarter of the people are either entirely or partially Irish. There are three Judges in the High Court of the Commonwealth, and one of these is an Irish Australian. The Chairman of Committee, by whose casting vote the West Australian Constitution was passed, bore the name of O'Kelly; South Australia has had an Irish Premier in the person of Mr. C. C. Kingston: the late Premier of Queensland, Mr. T. J. Byrnes, was an Irishman, and Irishmen are not few on the Bench in Queensland and in the Parliament.

I will not weary the reader by carrying the record farther. What has been said is sufficient to indicate the nature of the experience which lies at the root of Australian opinion about the soundness of Irish political talent. As to the fact in general, it is not too much to say that all the Prime Ministers of Australasia might be called in evidence.[1]

Quick intelligence, readiness of speech, resourcefulness, idealism, and a persuasive personality—the average Irishman's share of these qualities goes far to make him effective in counsel and in controversy. The more important gift lies deeper: it consists in his sympathetic imagination turned to political uses:—(1) by rough but sagacious insight into the problems that underlie political issues; (2) by intuition as to other men's minds and

[1] See Sir Joseph Ward's speech at the Irish National Banquet, 1913, on which occasion also Mr. Holman, the Attorney-General of New South Wales, deliberately acclaimed Mr. Redmond as "leader throughout the British Empire of every man who values the right of self-government."

the popular movements of thought and feeling. He knows his own mind, moreover, about the political objects to be attained, because he is in general a man of ideas, original or acquired. Also he is a man of action, and therefore he is a *practical* idealist. Further, besides knowing the minds of his fellows, he is sympathetic and responsive in dealing with them: thus he gives the impression of being the man who understands. Therefore, if he is strong and clear enough, he is the man who leads. If there are other Irishmen equally effective, they settle it between them. They are well able to weigh one another with sufficient accuracy. They have a turn for co-operation too, and believe in the elective principle.

It is probable that the political gift first noticed with admiration by the observant Englishmen of the eighties was the ability for coherence shown by the Irish Party under Mr. Parnell in the House of Commons, and by the Irish race behind it scattered through the world. That tremendous fact remains to-day,

has remained, grown larger, and become more significant during thirty years, a persistent solidarity in which the earlier flaws have disappeared. It needs some reflection to realize how remarkable that coherence was, considering the wide diversity of ideas that prevailed up to 1886 as to both means and ends, and considering also the strong and even stormy personalities of many who stood shoulder to shoulder for the Irish cause, in disregard of all differences, dislikes, suspicions, disapprovals, jealousies. There were the physical-force men, very dubious about the constitutionalists: there were the constitutionalists, very anxious about the men who relied on physical force. But to one idea all could agree—namely, that the Parliamentary Party should make the best fight possible in the British Parliament, in order to relieve Irish distress on the land and set up an Irish Parliament for the management of Irish affairs. By this central idea they held fast, and, never losing sight of it, stood by each other loyally through good report and evil.

The "Parnell movement" revealed many potentialities in Irish political nature, but above all it revealed the ability of the Irish—like the French in this respect—to grasp the one idea common to a vast number of differing minds, to hold it fast, and to group all other related ideas in subordination to it for practical purposes. The most irreconcilable Nationalists and the most timid Constitutionalists within the party desired alike that the United Kingdom Parliament should, in some way, be used for the benefit of Ireland: also they agreed alike that the necessary means for this purpose was a perfectly independent and coherent party, allowing no quarrel inside its ranks and no alliance, except on the main question, outside. This was the basis of that united movement which was backed by the Irish Nationalists scattered over the face of the globe. There is no other example in history that compares with this as showing ability, in a scattered and motley host, to cohere under the lead of an idea. And the example is the more remarkable because

the greatness of the personality at the head of the host centred in nothing less, but in nothing else, than his absolute trustworthiness as the servant of the idea. The people obeyed him because they trusted him, and they trusted him because he was the incarnation of the idea which gave them unity—a unity which once won by a nation can never again be wholly lost. Irishmen have a great capacity for differing, but when they begin to agree, there is no stopping them. The nineties supplied other examples of this genius for unity with difference :—(1) the co-operation of Unionists with Nationalists in protest against the over-taxation of Ireland, as revealed by the Royal Commission ; (2) the reunion of the Irish Parliamentary Party, broken, so hopelessly as it once seemed, by the Parnell tragedy ; (3) co-operation, irrespective of politics, in the Industrial, Literary, and Language movements.

The note of the racial character here is the practical idealism which is also so French. The mobile, concrete Celtic mind is at the back

of it. Suppose twenty million minds have, amid a thousand differences, one idea in common, and suppose that some man, or group of men, feeling this, take it as the basis of a practical policy and so proclaim it. The quickness and completeness with which the twenty million fall in line behind their standard-bearers depends on the degree of mobile concreteness in the racial intellectual character. The mind that moves with swiftness and unity easily rearranges its ideas, at least tentatively, round the common idea as centre. If that common idea has any hold on such a mind, then the hope of national unity which goes with this idea will make it strong ; and so, with more or less ease and completeness, according to its range of other ideas, the swift and singly moving mind thinks itself into a new attitude characterized by the acceptance of the ideal proposed as the basis of, at least, an immediate practical policy. The stalwart ex-Fenian John O'Leary, I suppose, never preferred constitutional to revolutionary methods, and all the

extremists were liable to fits of retrogression on their own views, but they were able to find something in themselves enabling them to fall into line behind men whose views were the very antithesis of their own. These, for their part, accepted without flinching the co-operation *on their own lines* of any Irishman, whatever his record.

Putting it more generally, it is characteristic of the concrete Celtic mind that it enables a group of persons with different ideas to "mobilize" easily under the lead of an idea. This it does because the concrete mind in each individual is able to mobilize itself with ease. A Celtic group thinks, as I have been told of Frenchmen at a scientific congress, like one man. This is because each man thinks himself into the position rapidly, and the position, while it may appeal, in some respects, differently to each, appeals also similarly to all in that one respect which is for all relevant to the immediate purpose. In an act of thought so sudden and swift as that by which a hundred

men under emotional excitement think the same thought and do the same deed simultaneously, there is a quick play of sympathetic imagination as well as of individual thought. They not only agree, they know also that they are agreed.

The fact that individual swiftness of thought and social simultaneity are thus connected is illustrated by the following account of the average history of a House of Commons joke once told me by an English member. "When a joke is made, or a humorous incident occurs, it takes effect first on the Irish benches: a burst of *simultaneous* laughter issues from that part of the building. Thence it is taken up by the neighbouring benches and *rolls gradually* over the House. I have noticed this very often. An Irish repartee to the Minister of the Crown will sometimes be shouted across the House *in unison* while the words are scarcely out of his mouth."

Ability to "mobilize" in a group turns on the inner ability of its members to readjust the attitude of mind and concentrate it at a new

practical point as required. Political adherence depends on the maintenance of the attitude thus taken up—the persistence of the idea. This persistence clearly is not the same quality as readiness to mobilize. And yet there is a close connection.

Mobility tends direct to social solidarity when the social conditions are fulfilled, that is, when the hundred minds or so are kept by circumstances in each other's presence. The mobile mind condemned to solitude loses touch with its kind, and may run away along its own tangents into a myriad eccentricities, such as would never occur to a slower mind on another solitary and neighbouring mountain-top. Of these two, both solitary, the least mobile is the more persistent: its excursions from its original centre of ideas are slower, slighter, and less frequent: its stability is self-dependent. There is a great charm in this absolute stability of character which we should be wrong to undervalue. To the mobile Celt this kind of stability is denied: even on the mountain-top alone new ideas grow and swell

in him, and, if his power of intellect is not high, may carry him far into the insanities of exaggerated and morbid individuality. This is the danger of prolonged solitude for the Celt. For one of the opposite type the danger is simple stagnation and dullness ; this is the lesser evil surely of the two. Moderate isolation leaves the one stable and fairly normal, while it makes the other eccentric, more separate from his kind than before.

But let the mobile Celt live in society, even though it be only in that imagination of society which is maintained by letters and newspapers. The mobility of temper—which is another aspect of accessibility to ideas—will by any kind of intercourse maintain his solidarity with his kind, and preserve that stability of mental equilibrium which is persistence of ideas at its best. His tendencies to go off along the tangent of his original ideas with preposterous speed are balanced by the constant central force of the social ideas with which he is in contact—the common sense of his social world. If the individual force is strong, so is the social

force, and together they keep him rapidly in movement, but always in the path of social sanity and common sense. Thus we need not be surprised to note that a Celt, so far as solitary, tends to be eccentric, while, so far as social, he tends to exemplify his type with extraordinary tenacity. Irishmen are at once more unlike and more like each other than their opposite, according as the tangential forces of solitude or the centripetal forces of society predominate in them. The golden mean which combines originality with common sense, individual mobility with individual persistence, is preserved best through the medium of social solidarity. Cheap newspapers, the penny post and village libraries may in the future play a large part in the fulfilment of those conditions of development which the Celtic races have required all along.

We may thus sum up the conclusion now reached. Mobility of temperament makes for instability of ideas, and, it may be, of character, when separated from the social medium to which it naturally and by its history belongs.

But the same mobility makes for the stability of thought and of character, so long as contact with its proper medium is maintained. Easy movement is as favourable to the social forces of restitution as it is to the individual forces that make for change.

In every life there are, however, intervals during which the central (*i.e.*, social) force is not producing any new impressions, either by restitution or otherwise, on the mind. The self is left to itself and to the workings of its own imagination. The salt of its sanity in such days is the social imagination. By this is kept alive the bygone touch of other minds, and thus are maintained the moorings which bind it to its kind. In temporary solitude, or absence from home, the other-conscious mind has still the feelings of the others, their thoughts, their wishes. Affection makes these into sacred ties, and fills the personal life with the sentiment of loyalty. This sentiment, grounded as it is in imagination of the affections and sympathies, becomes for the mobile Celt the permanent safeguard of his social attach-

ments and, through them, of his individual character. The Irishman who tampers with his sentiment of loyalty is doing a dangerous thing. He is cutting the rope that binds him to the weightiest anchor in the moorings of character, the anchor of social imagination supreme over instinct.

We have seen how Celtic mobility hangs with Celtic solidarity, and thus with Celtic persistence of ideas. A Celtic political idea does not die: it wanes, but somewhere its memory is enshrined. One day it is proclaimed to the world again, and its world rallies to its standard once more.

We have seen, too, how the completion of individual character by social influence may fail at this point and a certain series of types of the incomplete erratic Celt become possible. Celtic negatives attract attention: they appear as the unbalanced positive quality in exaggeration. Hence their variety and vexatious aggressiveness. Hence also the crying need for education and all goods of the soul—a crying need because the lack of these is a

positive hurt. The Teuton is only dull where the Celt is ridiculous and annoying.

In political life mere abstract mobility in the units enables a great movement to be made and led: but it also enables the enemy easily to break it up by the advancement of new and attractive ideas of a disintegrating character. Mobility implies expansive friendliness in general society, a capacity for the formation of new alliances: this in politics is one way of disintegrating old bonds. In Elizabethan Ireland, and much later, this was the form taken by the Irish political anti-genius. Celtic solidarity broke down in those stormy days for many reasons, of which the Celtic social nature, on the expansive side of it towards Teutonic neighbours, was certainly one. Note, on the other hand, that improved means of communication between the scattered members of one race works steadily, not towards the reduction of Celtic expansiveness, but towards the increase of that Celtic solidarity on which the stability of the national progress depends. When solidarity is secured, expansiveness

enriches the national feeling and adds to the national strength.

In modern Ireland—the Ireland of this century and the last—the conflict has been and is between ideas, not between races or great families. Abstract mobility means a liability to be swiftly moved and carried away by a great idea, with an equal liability to be drawn from it by another idea following after. This is the political character of which the French are, not very justly, accused, and perhaps it was an element in the political character of the ancient Greek. To it certainly the individual Gaelic Irishman has the liability of his temperament. It suggests the easiest line of attack on his political character. Against it stands up his social instinct making for solidarity, and thereby for a most conservative persistence in the old central ideas round which, and round which only, the race can be rallied. Social instinct must always be against a change of national standard: thus it acts as a safe and steady drag on tendencies to change in the national ideas. The Irish nation,

conscious of its nationhood, is to each one of its members the counterpoise of excessive racial accessibility to new political ideas. It may well be said that the Irish political genius has shown itself at its best in our generation, because never until now has the social instinct of nationhood found for itself sufficient opportunity to outweigh the Celtic fertility of ideas?

Even towards enemies the social nature has its instinctive play. When the Founder of Christianity laid it down as a principle that we should love our enemies, He implied that it was possible to regard a man as an enemy and nevertheless treat him with kindly human regard. The psychology of this Christian principle is plain enough: it lies in the fact that, even in the hour of deadliest strife, each of the two opponents is capable of respecting the feelings of the other and treating them as sacred to him equally with his own. Gaelic heroic literature is rich in pagan illustrations of this theme. At this point—this most characteristic point—Celtic nature is instinctively Christian. Ireland has been a battle-ground

for centuries, both pagan and Christian. No country has suffered more terribly from fierce internecine strife. But Irish social nature has been able to maintain its sympathies, its sense of a common nature, and a common consciousness in the face of the most persistent enemies. There is a contrast here between French and Irish history which argues for the presence of some gloomier racial element in the French. This Irish quality explains at once two marked features of Irish history. One is the capacity of the Irish race to absorb all strangers and enemies into itself. The other is that social incoherence of mediæval Ireland already noticed which proceeds in actual fact, as we see when we study it, as much from the tendency of all men to fraternize with each other as from their equally indisputable tendency to quarrel. It remains that, in the long run, this Gaelic gift for realizing human brotherhood in any form may prove to be the most potent element for Ireland's weal in the Irish national genius for politics.

His emphatic personality makes the Irish-

man fiery in dispute, his sociability disposes him, during the intervals of warfare, to expand in friendly sympathy towards his enemies. Both effects tended to produce, in the old stormy times, social incoherence within the nation. The peculiarly shifting character of the English settlements, moreover, and the capricious method of English government in all the centuries, encouraged the tendency to alternate bursts of war and friendship between the two races in Ireland. The remarkable fact, however, is that there was, even in the most chaotic times, an extraordinary amount of kindly feeling between hereditary foes, mixed with a most extravagant passion for warfare. We find nothing like the fierce steady feuds between the Scotch clans which are the counterpart of the magnificent loyalty and coherence within the clan. The Irish tribe was less coherent, but, as a compensation, the Irish race, by Hibernicising the aliens, saved Ireland for the Irish to a considerable extent. The Gael of Scotland is the Highland Scot to-day: the Gael of Ireland is the Irish type.

In the counsels of the Irish Nationalist Parliamentary Party the tendency to fraternize with English Liberals was regarded by many as a serious danger to party independence. The members of the Home Rule Party under Mr. Parnell, in the great fighting days of 1881-6, considered themselves as practically bound over to a social, as well as a political, policy of unfriendliness. In those days no Irish member dined with an English member. It was felt necessary for discipline—that is, for unity—to negative by strict principles the dangerous sociability of the Gael.

Let us look more closely at this pleasant quality in order to see whether, apart from circumstances so abnormal as those of Irish history, it is liable to such excess as to call for counterbalance in some other quality. When friends are made readily and freely it becomes easy, if one be otherwise so inclined, to make new friends in the place of old ones; and this may lead to fickleness unless there be some powerful preventing force. The inexpansive, ungenial man needs his old friends

the more because he does not easily make new ones. The genial man is faithful only because there is a positive force of faithfulness in him. This is the conservative virtue which keeps balance against the expansive virtue of geniality.

To be faithful is the same thing as to be conservative in affection. Irish instinct tends thus direct to faithfulness. But let an Irishman reason himself away from his instinct in this respect, and the chances are that he will drift very far—farther than the less instinctive Teuton—just as a woman who has lost her self-respect is apt to continue to lose it more fatally than a man. And in general it should be noted that the nature which is governed by fine instincts in perfect balance suffers more in moral deterioration by the destruction of one instinct than is suffered in like case by the nature which walks coolly and calmly in the mean of reason or duty. Still, it is a fine thing to have the instincts, and it remains to preserve them by cultivating a rational ideal of life.

Faithfulness is in politics a conservative

force. Is not this conservative quality itself an outcome from that central quality of concreteness which we discovered at the outset? The concrete mind reacts, not partially but with wholeness and swiftness, on its new impressions; it does not lose the old in the new any more than it ceases to feel and to imagine when it thinks—any more than it ceases to realize its personality even when most absorbed in the things of the world outside.

Here, then, is our conclusion. The normal Irish nature, even of civilized to-day, owes its politico-social quality to the rare force with which it has preserved, and the fullness with which it has developed, the twin primitive instincts of universal friendliness and conservative affection—the instinct to fellowship of man with man, and the instinct to cling close and persistently to its prime objects of affection.

It is this sense of the eternal in human attachments that gives to all Irish social life its characteristic undertone of spirituality. In this, perhaps more than in anything else, Celts of all nations understand each other.

V

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE ANCIENT GAEL

Born into life!—man grows
Forth from his parents' stem
And blends their bloods, as those
Of theirs are blent in them;
So each new man strikes root into a far fore-time.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

CHAPTER V

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE ANCIENT GAEL

IRELAND is a land of memories that endure. All the old Gaelic institutions were ground into powder during centuries of violent and continual strife. Yet few of the old ideas really died out: in recent years they have used the new forms imposed upon them, turning these into fresh vehicles of their life. The ideal sources of the Irish modern movement lie in deep instincts begotten of the dim historic past —instincts which expressed themselves in the development of the ancient Irish organization of society. In each branch of this organization can be seen the original Aryan idea on the subject, modified just so far as was necessary

for the purposes of development, but not transformed as in other lands. Consider, for instance, the case of tribal rights and land ownership. Throughout Europe tribalism changed into feudalism, and the original tribal idea was lost: the free man's status was reduced to that of the unfree feudal tenant. In Ireland similar external forces were at work, but the tribal idea reacts stiffly on these forces so that they modify and preserve it: the Brehon law [1] provides means and sets limits for the preservation of the tribesman's freedom, and even for the acquisition of tribal freedom by the "fuidir," or unfree tenant of alien race. Celtic idealism and the Celtic social temper, reinforced by Christian influences, would seem to be the explanation of this fact. The high character and gallant record of the unfree tribes may also have contributed.

A study of Irish society under the

[1] Compare provisions to similar effect in the Hebrew law.

Brehon law in pre-Norman times will fully illustrate the claim here put forward, that Gaelic institutions were characterized by the maintenance of the "idea" of the Aryan tribe throughout the necessary changes that beset it. In such maintenance of the central idea, change becomes development—progress in the best sense—a reflective, self-conscious progress from the simple to the complex.

The common tribesman was the peasant head of the family, enjoying freely the use of the tribal land. The tribesman might fall into debt, make a contract with the chief of his tribe—or some other person of weight—by which he borrowed cattle for his use in agriculture, and undertook to pay interest in service, homage and material goods. This is the origin of rent in Ireland, and probably in other European countries as well. Elsewhere, it was the beginning of feudalism. The peculiarity of Ireland lies in the fact that the Brehon land law was developed side by side with the conditions leading to feudalism, to

check and regulate them at every turn. Thus, as the needy peasant found it necessary to "take stock" from his chief and become a tenant, the law-loving intellect of the Gael stepped in and regulated with the utmost exactness the rent which tenants were to pay their lords. Hence the difference between the Irish idea of land tenure and the idea in all other European countries where landlordism still exists. The idea of a judicial rent is as old in Ireland as the institution of rent itself. Even the chief of the tribe was not excepted from the dominion of law: the king's rents were regulated as well as those of all the others.

The law also made provision for the termination of a tenancy. After rent and homage had been rendered for seven years, the tenant became entitled to the stock if the chief died; and, if the tenant died, his heirs were partially, though not wholly, relieved from their obligation. Thus the law aimed not only at regulating the relations between landlord and

tenant, but at the prevention of permanency in the servile relationship. Clearly, the tendency throughout is to conserve the ancient tribal idea of a community of freemen by limiting the power of the strong to make contracts with the weak. Contrast this with the unchecked degeneration of tribalism in mediæval Europe.

The Irish law tracts give us, in the fuidir class, the true prototype of the nineteenth-century Irish tenant. Strangers, tribeless and homeless, needed not only land to settle upon and perhaps a little capital to start with, but also the protection of a claim on some society. The chief no doubt had, in early times, access to the waste lands of the tribe, and on these it was easy for him to settle strangers who came to him. Thus the fuidir would enter into a free contract with the lord, by which he obtained leave to settle on the land and was secured in the protection of his lord, who thenceforth stood to him in the relation of family, *i.e.*, was bail and witness

for him in the tribal courts. On the other hand, he would agree to pay the lord a rent, and the law left the two perfectly free to agree on that rent as best they might. The lord might accept the fuidir's offer or let him go; the tenant was free to pay or go. The rent of a fuidir is definitely distinguished in the great law tract, the "Seanchus Mor" from the fair rent paid by one of the tribe, as a "rack-rent from a person of stranger tribe." So to be a tribesman was to have the protection of the law, and to be a stranger was to be left to the lord's goodwill, public opinion and the natural law of demand and supply.

Now the result of the progress of feudalism in Europe was to turn all tribesmen into fuidir tenants in the sense of the Brehon law; and the downfall of feudalism, as between king and barons in modern times, brought in modern landlordism with its mere tenants-at-will. This system was introduced into Ireland, but clearly as a foreign system. The Brehon law in the old days checked the feudal tendency at

every turn, and *its ideas have not died out even to-day*. It is indeed striking to note how the ancient practical ideas, crushed below the surface by new institutions and opposed from the outside in later times, have survived, and so make their first re-appearance, in the modern world of the British Isles, from the mind of the nation that invented their practice hundreds of years ago. In fact, *the idealistic race is necessarily conservative, though not blindly so as towards particular institutions or towards mere custom in any guise*. Progressive conservatism is of the essence of the Irish political genius. This is one of the facts which are explained by the hypothesis of Celtic psychology set forth in these pages.

Another illustration of the conservative way in which these old Irish developed their civilization may be found in the extraordinary development of the idea of kinship, voluntary no less than natural, as the source of mutual duties and joint responsibilities capable of being defined by law. The responsibility of

the natural family for the crimes of its members is an idea to be found in early Aryan societies generally. But in the other societies it was superseded as they became more complex. In Ireland it was developed to suit the complexities. This appears more particularly in connection with the fruitful idea of voluntary kinship, applicable to all bonds between man and man outside the relationship of the natural family. How characteristic this of the expansive and conservative Celt! The bonds of natural family affection are transcended, not by the denial, but by the expansion, of the family idea. Workers at one craft form a voluntary family—called a craft's guild in mediæval Europe — and the law treated its members as an artificial group of kindred. The peasants likewise formed such groups, called "Bruighs," and the law recognized this voluntary group as a *family* entitled to a representative — their elected head — in the tribal assembly. The Brehon law supplies many missing links: it shows us here how modern

representative institutions point back to an origin in the early constitution of the tribe. Our Member of Parliament is the elected head of the voluntary family. It is only the old Irish law that keeps the original ideal in sight. The people who have no family acquire by co-operation the rights of family.

The Irish laws of fosterage enshrine the same idea in this conservative progress from simple to complex. Fosterage pure and simple, the giving and taking of children for nurture, existed in all the early Aryan communities; but in Ireland the practice became extraordinarily prevalent, and was carefully regulated by the law. It was quite usual, till very late times, that children of noble birth should be fostered by the lowlier dependents of their families; and this custom has no doubt contributed to intensify the sentiment of affection between the different ranks of the sept or clan. It has supplied the idea of foster-kindred when that of kindred was obscure. But it is with the use of the fosterage

idea in spiritual, intellectual, and industrial relationships that we are more specially concerned. In a society organized under the idea of kindred it is natural that every relationship should be assimilated to the family relationship. So we find in Ireland the family of the saint and spiritual fosterage, or gossipred, the fraternity of the craftsman and industrial fosterage, the family of the teacher, whether bard or brehon, and literary fosterage, besides the military foster-children of the great warriors. It is about literary fosterage that we read most in the Brehon law tracts, which give, under this title, the law of the relation between teacher and pupil. An entire subtract in the "Seanchus Mor" is devoted to the subject of fosterage, and sets out with the utmost minuteness the rights and duties attaching to all parties concerned. It is plain that the Brehon conception of the relation between foster-child and foster-family is a slight variation of that which regulates the relation between the child and its natural family, the child owing certain

duties to the family, and the family bearing certain responsibilities for the child.

Out of the conception of fosterage grew the law regulating the relation of pupil to teacher—the literary foster-father. "However it may surprise us," says Sir Henry Maine, "that the connection between pupil and teacher was regarded as peculiarly sacred by the ancient Irish, and as closely resembling natural fatherhood, the Brehon tracts leave us no room for doubt on the point. It is expressly laid down that it created the same *patria potestas* as actual paternity; and the literary foster-father, though he teaches gratuitously, has a claim through life upon portions of the property of the literary foster-son. Thus the brehon with his pupils constituted not a school in our sense, but a true family. While the ordinary foster-father was bound by the law to give education of some kind to his foster-children—to the sons of chiefs instruction in riding, shooting with the bow, swimming, and chess-playing; to their daughters, instruction in sew-

ing, cutting-out, and embroidery—the brehon trained his foster-sons in learning of the highest dignity, the lore of the chief literary profession. He took payment, but it was the law which settled it for him. It was part of his status, and not the result of a bargain." [1]

Remembering that the natural family was in a measure responsible for the ill-deeds of its members, we look for some definition of the tutor's more limited responsibility for his pupils. The following passage from the laws makes this point clear, and gives us, at the same time, a pleasant picture of the educational system at work :—

" The poet (or tutor) commands his pupils. The man from whom education is received is free from the crimes of his pupils if they be the children of natives, even though he feeds and clothes them, and that they pay him for their learning. He is free, even though it be a stranger he instructs, feeds, and clothes, pro-

[1] Sir Henry Maine's *Early History of Institutions*, Lecture VIII, p. 242.

vided it is not for pay but for God that he does it. If he feeds and instructs a stranger *for pay*, it is then he is accountable for his crimes." [1]

The dual play of ideas in this passage gives us a sudden insight into the ideal life of the times. On the one hand, there is the tribal idea of the citizen's strict responsibility to the State for those he may introduce into the community. On the other hand, this idea is annulled by the permission to exercise free hospitality without limit. We know, too, that it was customary for the neighbours of the mediæval schools to exercise their hospitality for the support of the strangers who flocked as students to the schools. The "poor scholar," dependent on the charity of his neighbours for his living, as on the kindness of the teachers for his learning, was as familiar a feature of Irish society as the bard and the brehon themselves. The entertainment of

[1] O'Curry's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, vol. ii., p. 79.

strange students was, in fact, regarded by the people, and by the law, as a duty of national hospitality.

The children of the Irish upper classes paid for their education in the ordinary way, and the sons of the poorer classes who were educated at the same college were provided for by an arrangement similar to that of the modern, though now old-fashioned, sizarship. They waited on the wealthier students and received educational benefits in return. The scholars who belonged to the neighbourhood lived in their homes, and those who were pensioners lived in the humble-looking group of dwellings called the college; while others, coming from remote or foreign districts, lived in their own huts adjoining the college and were supplied with provisions by the neighbours. The living doubtless was plain indeed, but of high thinking there was no lack.

The whole educational system was a spontaneous growth over which the law threw its mantle of authority as it grew, regulating it

by careful definition of ideas concerning the right and desirable, which were already more than half expressed in the national consciousness. Thus the aspiration after knowledge and intellectual activity, which is of the very essence of Irish character, fulfilled itself at an early period of political *development, by institutions which embody the essential idea of Irish social life—the idea of kinship, natural and voluntary, as the source of mutual duties and joint responsibilities, which it is the business of the law to define rather than to enforce.*

Probably I have said enough to indicate that there is evidence, and the nature of the evidence, in support of the fact which I set out by asserting, that the tendency of Gaelic civilization was to progress by conserving—to find ever in the old ideas a means of envisaging and adapting new facts. Everywhere, more or less, the old disappears and gives place to the new. Everywhere, more or less, the old develops and is preserved in the

new. But in the old Ireland where the Celtic influence was freely at work progress was less revolutionary and more evolutionary—conservative of ideas, while rapid and ready in adapting those ideas to new uses. For notice in particular that readiness of resource is as characteristic of the Brehon law as is persistence in original ideals. France, indeed, is known to modern Europe as the land of revolutions, but the ruling classes in old France were the very antithesis of the Celt and had destroyed every Celtic institution. In France the Celtic influence was not free till it freed itself, or some other harsher influence freed it, by the Revolution.

There was, at any rate, no incapacity to solve new problems in ancient any more than in modern Ireland. Conservative persistence is balanced by the adaptability which seizes readily on a change in the situation.

And here it is obvious that we have come once more back to that groundwork of fundamental character so fully discussed in a

previous chapter. The mobile mind thinks itself into its situation ; it is reflective, idealistic, forms stable ideas of its life and surroundings. Ideas persist as circumstances change : thus the *idealistic race is conservative of its ideas*. Social solidarity, moreover, so far as realized, makes strongly for the persistence of social, and indeed of all communicated, ideas. Hence the conservative instinct, which is the guiding wheel of Celtic civilization, is a natural product of that swiftly moving, concrete mind which produces also the driving wheel of its progressive activity.

In all departments of thought and feeling—in art, in literature, in domestic habits, in religious observances, in the whole round of those activities to which the idea of progressive civilization applies—the Celt changes his ways, but changes conservatively. Both his Liberalism and his Conservatism have often been noticed. The former when dominant is softened by reverence, the latter always centres in the life, not the stagnation, of ideas. This

is the conservatism of thought, not the conservatism of habit.

It is open to question whether this unforgetful method of civilization is the most effective method, looked at from a wider point of view; but there can be no doubt that the process of it, as above described, produces more gracious individual development. Let us look more closely into this matter. Does the native Irish method of civilization show itself on the smaller scale as characteristic of the educational development of the individual Irishman? Does the educated Irishman on the average differ in this respect from the average educated Englishman?

To this my experience replies in the affirmative. He differs much as the race differs. Just as new Ireland is still old Ireland, so the educated Irishman remains more than others the natural in becoming the civilized man. He sheds a less amount than usual of his ancient self: he is more of a boy and more also of a primitive man than are his peers else-

where. His proverbial naturalness of manner, his unconventionality, his primitive directness of outlook, all are signs of this. He lives in cities, and loves them all the more because they do not force him, in the inner life, into any breach of contact with mother nature. In the crowded streets of New York he still feels the influence of the green hills in Ireland, the open spaces, and the fragrant perfume of the turf. Or he moves in the academic circles of universities, or the more strait-laced circles of theological colleges, heavily weighted with learning, dignity, or pious reputation—weighted but not weighed down, bearing knowledge and even clerical sanctity like a wand in his hand, not like a halter round his neck, his heart rooted still, be he priest or professor, in the old simple things of life, buoyant, fresh, unartificial, all the more dignified because he takes no thought for dignity, all the more self-possessed because his sense of good still centres in primitive gifts. It is true that, to a large extent, the

highest education tends to produce in all persons this completeness of character which turns on the preservation, or revival, of the primitive man within the scholar. This tendency takes effect on all natures that are broad and concrete enough. But the opposite tendency exists and takes effect in other cases; the academic is often the mere academic. And in this respect the commonplace Celt comes off better than the commonplace Teuton.

The aim of personal education for the individual—of social civilization for the race—is to grow in the soil of human nature all the possible goods of which it will hold the seeds, while rooting up no good thing that is already there. To this process of conservative development all human nature takes more or less kindly, because all human nature is more or less of the type I have described. All human nature is more or less Celtic in this sense. Only, Celtic human nature is more Celtic, more bound up in ideals of life to be maintained, more apt in the invention of practical means for their realization.

VI

THE GAEL IN LITERATURE

An air is more lasting than the voice of the birds,
A word is more lasting than the riches of the world.

IRISH PROVERB.

CHAPTER VI

THE GAEL IN LITERATURE

In these days of the Gaelic literary revival, the Abbey Theatre, the Ulster playwrights, of William Butler Yeats, of John M. Synge, and, in another field, of George Bernard Shaw, it is more than ever of interest to inquire whether Ireland has it in her to make a characteristic contribution to the world's literature. The literary revival, in its primary sense, means the publication, translation, and development into new forms of ancient Irish literature, and no student doubts that a valuable addition is thus being made to the general stock of literary lore. The revival aims at more than this. It aims at the recovery of their old literary habits by the Irish people, gentle and simple;

and ideas are afloat for effecting this recovery by bringing to every cottage hearth opportunity for acquaintance with the masterpieces of literature, not Irish only but of all sorts, as in the ancient times. Village libraries wisely stocked would be a priceless boon.

Does it mean more than this? Does there lie folded within it the idea that the Irish race, speaking and writing in English, has a literary work in the future, for the doing of which it has special gifts, and which would not be done if it failed to maintain its individuality?

The answer to this question the future will more fully reveal: but there is no lack of experience on which to ground an affirmative faith. We are indeed passing through that phase where faith is merged in sight. The writers I have named are but the largest and most diverse stars in a considerable cluster, each with some characteristic—romantic in several styles, or humorous, or satiric. Reference to a few examples must suffice.

There is nothing more exquisite in dramatic literature, more lyric in effect, more profoundly Irish, than *Kathleen-ni-Houlihan,* by W. B. Yeats. We have the wholesome, homely Irish life, the strange old woman with mystic power, symbolic of the age-long tragedy of Ireland —the real and the symbol set side by side in a single cottage scene, each claiming allegiance from the young man's heart—the bright young girl overwhelmed by sorrow at her lover's loss, and finally the " Shan Van Vocht "—the poor old woman herself—transformed, though we see her not, into that glorious shape of beauteous youth, reborn of Irish love and Irish hope at every climax of the nation's struggle upwards.

Peter. Did you see an old woman going down the path ?

Patrick. I did not : but I saw a young woman, and she had a walk like a queen.

It was to the old woman that the young man had given his devotion. Others there are who

wait for the appearance of the maiden with the queen-like walk.

But this little play is not only Irish in its profound appreciation, its delicate expression of the Irish patriotic romance: it is Irish in the literary method employed, that subtle interweaving of vivid realism with robust idealism which marks alike the composition of Gaelic romantic literature and the talk of the people in the West to-day.

This last repays study: the original live sources of fine Irish speech are by no means dry. It must be that there is in these people a pressing inner need for the expression of thought in speech. Otherwise, how is it possible to account for the fact that an Irish peasant has on an average in his vocabulary about ten words for every one used by the English peasant?[1] This inner need is in part

[1] Dr. Douglas Hyde wrote down 3,000 words from Roscommon people who could neither read nor write, and he thinks he fell short of the vocabulary actually in use by 1,000 words more. He suggests that in Kerry the average vocabulary used by Irish speakers is probably

the outcome of the highly developed social sense; and the good English vocabulary even in the Irish-speaking districts can only be explained by desire of speech with the stranger as he comes along. The peasant's gift of speech is, however, more than the wealth of his vocabulary, and that vocabulary itself is a very different thing from the sum of words and phrases picked up by attention to English speakers of the day. Padraic Colum in *My Irish Year* should be read in this connection: the book abounds in examples of picturesque talk and of what he calls the Irish peasant's "compelling sense of style." Among the people of the Midlands he finds a vigorous and imaginative speech. A man speaks about the virtues of a certain well. "The water of that well," he said, "when the sun would be splitting the flags, the coldness of it would shiver the teeth in your head."

between 3,000 and 5,000 words. Dr. Pedersen took down 2,500 words from Irish speakers in the Aran Islands. It is said that the English peasant's vocabulary consists of from 300 to 500 words.

The Genius of the Gael

In his preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, J. M. Synge tells us that in this, as in all his other plays, "I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggarwomen and ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk imagination of these fine people. Any one who has lived in real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know that the wildest sayings in this play are tame indeed compared with the fancies one may hear in any hill-side cabin in Geesala or Carraroe, or Dingle Bay." And of the importance to art of this great "find" of his he says: "On the stage one must have reality and one must have joy. . . . In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be

written by any one who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland for a few years more [1] we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent and tender, so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks."

With the touch of pessimism in that last sentence we need not identify ourselves. It is perhaps of a piece with that strange manifestation of an improbable inhumanity in the characters of this play which mars its effect as drama acted on the stage, and even makes one want to turn one's eyes away. Having seen *The Playboy* acted once, I do not desire to see it again: but I have read and will read it many times for the delight I take in the splendour of its language—language that for vigorous imagination, bold metaphor,

[1] This is the pessimistic note in Synge.

and perfect phrasing could not well be surpassed.

By far the most beautiful of all Synge's plays is *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. Here we have an antique subject of the highest dignity, and yet the language woven into the dialogue by the genius of the dramatist is, as he tells us, found in the talk of our twentieth-century peasant Ireland. There is something in the musical swing of the phrase in all these plays which makes one think of the chants that are sung by the winds on the hill and the waves on the shore; but the dominant formative influence each phrase bespeaks is that of an intense underlying interest in the problem of saying briefly all that is in one's mind as unmistakably, as convincingly, and as persuasively as possible. For an example, take this fine dialogue between the beautiful princess and the foster-mother who loves her devotedly.

Deirdre. I'm in dread of going or staying, Lavarcham. It's lonesome this place, having happiness like ours, till I'm asking each day will this day match yesterday, and

will to-morrow take a good place beside the same day in the year that's gone, and wondering all times is it a game worth playing, living on until you're dried and old, and our joy is gone for ever.

Lavarcham. If it's that ails you I tell you there's little hurt getting old, though young girls and poets do be storming at the shapes of age. (*Passionately*) There's little hurt getting old, saving when you're looking back, the way I'm looking this day, and seeing the young you have a love for breaking up their hearts with folly. Take my word and stop Naisi, and the day'll come you'll have more joy having the senses of an old woman and you with your little grandsons shrieking round you than I'd have this night putting on the red mouth and the white arms you have to go walking lonesome byways with a gamey king.

Turning to the same writer's records of his walks through Ireland, we find careful reports of talks with tramps and peasants. These are what the world calls ignorant people, with little knowledge probably of the English Bible, and less, if any, of Shakespeare's plays. This is how they talk. It is "an old man with a white pointed face and a hoary beard" who pulls himself out of the ditch to walk with the stranger, and presently begins "talking

in a mournful voice of the famines and misfortunes that have been in Ireland.

" ' There have been three cruel plagues,' he said, ' out through the country since I was born in the west. First there was the big wind in 1839 that tore away the grass and green things from the earth. Then there was the blight that came on the 9th of June in the year 1846. Up to then the potatoes were clean and good ; but that morning a mist rose up out of the sea, and you could hear a voice talking near a mile off across the stillness of the earth. It was the same the next day, and the day after, and so on, for three days or more ; and then you could begin to see the tops of the stalks lying over as if the life was gone out of them. And that was the beginning of the great trouble and famine that destroyed Ireland. Then the people went on, I suppose, in their wickedness and their animosity of one against the other, and the Almighty God sent down the third plague, and that was the sickness called the cholera. Then the people left

the town of Sligo—it's in Sligo I was reared —and you could walk through the streets at the noon of day and not see a person, and you could knock at one door and another door and find no one to answer you. The people were travelling out north and south and east, with the terror that was on them; and the country people were digging ditches across the roads and driving them back where they could, for they had great dread of the disease.' "

I am but one of the common crowd, without the skill to note and memory to retain that marks these gifted observers. Nevertheless, I have seen not a little of the Irish people in all parts and listened to their choice and ready talk. This quality of choiceness interests me much. Some choose word and phrase by instinct, some by deliberate act of selection. The tramcar conductor in Dublin may be heard any day discarding a moderately suitable word to substitute another more apt or effective. It is noteworthy that synonyms should in rapid succession occur to his mind.

More noteworthy is the comparatively rare use made of common swear-words and slang-words in country parts. In Kerry I was in a third-class carriage travelling from Cahirciveen on a fair day. I had for fellow-passengers about half a dozen young men fresh from the fair, one of them rather tipsy and the other five engaged in supervising him for his own good, with much excitement all round and quantities of quarrelsome language. What interested me was this. Whereas the young men used many words, they never used an ordinary "bad" one at all. This was not either virtue or religion, I think, but just the Irishman's habit of using the words he means. Irish invective is, I believe, a branch of literature in itself, dying out perhaps in our day. The poets of the old days wielded it as a weapon of terror over princes.

Here is a Highlander's story, an old one certainly, but it illustrates the point. There was a certain general who had a Highland servant. The general's heart was set on

putting down bad language among his soldiers. "I would not be troubling myself, General, if I were you," said Donald, "at the few little words those men do be using. Now if a man had the Gaelic he could be saying all that is in him and never use the same word twice." We may take it that the Gaelic language would be in sonorous phrases, apt as well as strong. English slang-words also, though not unknown, have no great vogue in Ireland: like swear-words, they argue poverty in choice of speech.

The twin gift to choiceness of speech is fluency; both depend for their effectiveness on a rich vocabulary: otherwise, they supplement and stimulate each other. In Irish writers and speakers the characteristic most obvious to an Englishman is fluency. It is easy to talk or write when words come easily: and this facility is no doubt a great temptation to write or speak when there is nothing to say. The "windbag" Irish orator does exist, and, still more, has existed. On his native soil he is kept in check, since his fellows there,

having their measure of the same facility, estimate it at its value—that is, very lightly. The educated Irishman learns, in a double sense, to distrust his own fluency; his choiceness as to words, his compelling sense of style, warn him to weigh well all his sentences. And this is probably the reason why the educated Irishman, although he speaks better than his English peer, does so on the average, as I believe, with more anxiety. He does not fear that he will fail to get through, but he does fear that he may fail to say the thing he means, or fail to say it to his liking. Starting with facility, he sets his standard by significance, and sets it high. In a pleasant impromptu to fill up time he succeeds easily. Too much of this ruins him for better things.

Be this as it may, it will not be denied that control of language—a ready co-operation of thought and word—is characteristic of the Gaelic mental manifestation as seen in the Irishman. True, the language-gift is not limited to the Gaelic Irish. In Anglo-

Irish circles also tongues wag freely and to good effect. But the more Gaelic the circle, the more striking the gift. And here it may be remarked, in passing, that the Irish quality of the Ulsterman, who is half a Scotchman, may be traced in part to the racial fact that, in so far as he is Scotch, which is not altogether, he is largely Highland Scotch, *i.e.*, of the same race as the Gaelic Irish. There is little to choose in the way of race between the Presbyterian Macdonald of the north and the Catholic O'Donnell of the western province. Moreover, the qualities that distinguish the Celt are qualities that can be made to grow by use and association.

Power of language implies the tendency of words to rise with the thoughts, to think in language, so that thought and the speech of it are parts of a single mental act. The man who expresses himself with difficulty thinks habitually without flowing out into words. He is either centred in the source of thought—

a difficult thing to conceive, but it occurs [1] —or he expresses himself to himself in some silent way, in pictorial imagination or some personal symbolic shorthand, or by the use of his hands in art production. When he speaks he has to *put* his thoughts into words. As compared with the eloquent man he is like one who translates from his own tongue into a foreign language. Words are the native language of the eloquent man. Thought and speech are of the same act to him, so closely do these correlated functions work together for his ends.

What is eloquence, then, but an example of the facility of all-round consciousness and consequent concrete, close-knit being with which we have identified the Celtic mind? Thought flashes into words, words flash back to stimulate thought, because mental action in general is of this swiftly co-operating, variously re-

[1] This is not the place to argue the psychological question as to how thought is possible without complete expression. I have no doubt that it is, and am quite ready to argue it on the appeal to experience.

ciprocating kind. Physically we may suppose that the currents of action move quickly, so that all parts of the brain are more readily roused to act together.

Mere fluency of words is a very small part of the characteristic as a whole. Of far greater importance for literary excellence is the closeness with which the pictorial imagination runs alongside thought, playing into it, giving vent to it, illustrating it with images that pierce the mind of the listener, adorning it with a wealth of graphic fancy that reacts as stimulus on itself. Graphic power is of the very essence of literary excellence. No writer or speaker makes others see except in so far as he himself sees; and unless he is deficient in words, or they below the normal in visual imagination, what he sees they see also, and through sight, by way of images, an entry is made into thought. He who uses metaphors without himself having imaged their content is curiously ineffective. An original metaphor cannot come into being at all without the

full action corresponding of the originator's imagination. Hence its power, because it is sure to be expressed in words that indicate the particulars of the image and their exact fitness. But literature is full of hackneyed metaphors that have been used again and again, and have come to symbolize merely the thought they illustrate without any stimulus of the imagination corresponding. They are used as mechanically as ordinary words, which also abound in the implicit suggestion of metaphor. "A stranded vessel," "a rudderless bark," "the flowing tide"—metaphors like these in a suitable context are apt by long use to suggest their meaning in the context only, without even a back-current of imagination for the images themselves.

Now, the true literary mind dealing with even such simple material as this is always active on it as imagination. It never uses a metaphor without feeling the life thereof. This is the secret of using old metaphors in an original manner. When used by one who

has the image before him, the image is exactly fitted to the context, with subtle natural modifications that make the whole one and unique. Thus the dying metaphor has given to it a new lease of life. A metaphor, to be alive, must in a sense be new-born when it is used. Its new birth in the speaker's mind is expressed by the aptness of its resetting in the context of his speech.

There is a metaphor frequently used in the old Irish stories. In flight or pursuit the hero rides so swiftly that the March wind cannot overtake him. Perhaps the form of this metaphor helps to make it more than ordinarily vivid. I always see the rider untouched by any wind except the draught of his way, and yet I feel the keen spring wind blow on me out of the quarter behind him, and see the bowed clumps of heather on the wind-swept hills. But in the main it strikes fresh because used freshly.

This quality of reality is in general very marked in the metaphors of the Gaelic tales.

They have the real smell of the brine upon them and are steeped in the colours of Irish nature. Thus, as we read, bits of Irish scenery rise to our minds. It is a mark of their originality that they thus imply locality. The realization of local colouring on each occasion stamps the oft-used metaphor afresh as it issues from the mind.

Local colour marks the old Irish romances in another way. In them events all happen in particular places which can be identified to-day. Locality seldom becomes blurred and uncertain, as it does, for instance, in the great Teutonic epic of the Nibelungen Lied. Handed down from generation to generation, the Gaelic romance takes hold on the imagination of each narrator with its local circumstance all distinct and clear. Here we have obviously the same liveliness of imagination which accounts for the robust vitality of Celtic metaphor. In both qualities we see the excellence of the graphic gift.

And the graphic gift in its essence is this:

that the eye works closely with the trains of thought, acting with them, reacting on them, picturing out the idea in images, and so stimulating it to the birth of more ideas by the enlarged vitality thus given to it. With this goes another poet's secret, the eye open always to Nature, quick to take impressions, accurate to observe. The illustration of thought in imagery is rooted thus in the truth of Nature, and is instinct with that penetration and accuracy of sight which as much distinguishes the works of imagination from those of fancy as it distinguishes science from mere speculative activity in thought. The common Irish, or Highland, peasant resembles so far as he goes the great literary artist in that his pictorial imagination is always active and always sane. His images are in terms of Nature as she is—his eye always open to her truth.

Now, if the Celtic quality were mere activity of imagination this would not be so. It may become that by allowing the mental energy to

centre itself in imagery to such an extent that imagination ceases to be responsible to its masters—to sense on the one hand, to the unity of thought on the other. This is like the state of the dreamer in sleep; and it can easily happen under the exhilaration of great imaginative activity. In such case observation is inaccurate, imagery fanciful, ideas falsified rather than particularized in imagination; fiction, everywhere, predominates over fact.

But the imaginative gift which proceeds from the concreteness of mental activity—all the mind at work, with stimulus to the sense organs, when at work at all—is a very different matter. It is open-eyed and sane on the side of sense, controlled by the outer reality. It is controlled no less by the inner reality of thought demanding logical unity in all mental manifestations. Celtic imaginativeness has this sanity, and thus it may be argued to proceed from that wholeness of reaction, or concreteness, which, as we have seen, accounts in so many other ways for the observed characteristics of the Celt.

I may seem to have spoken of imagination as if it were concerned only with visual creation; but this was merely for clearness of ideas so far, and the activity of the ear, no less than that of the eye, is concerned in the concreteness of mental action as here considered. The gift of words is in part a gift of ear, and, as a whole, is no doubt related closely to oral imaginativeness. This plays on the organs of articulation, on the one hand, and keeps them even during silence in a condition of nascent varying activity. On the other hand, it reacts on the central speech centre, where, to put it metaphorically, thought is coined into words, under the stimulus, in this case at least, of oral imagination. In this stimulus and the guidance that goes with it lie the secret of the melodies of speech. If the speech centre be dominated solely by thought, then thought is expressed, but with little or no music in the expression. If it be dominated by the oral imagination—the ear, as we say—then musical effect prevails over meaning;

we have the melodious periods of empty oratory. But if mental action is closely knit, then the word-selections of thought are influenced by the melodious imaginings of sense, and yet the word-selections of ear are kept subordinate to the necessities of thought: thought speaks in numbers, for the numbers come.[1]

When a song is written to music, the ear plainly leads the thought. When philosophic thought is written in verse, the position should be reversed, though the oral imagination has influence even then, reshaping itself freely to fall in with the thought, but apt in the end to effect a compromise only. An ordinary person with some power of versification may observe, when he has something to express in verse, how he casts about for a metre and rhyme into harmony with which it naturally falls. When thought is hammered out into a definite metre, the life fades in both thought

[1] No doubt the muscles of articulation also are largely concerned in this disposition to metrical speech.

and rhythm. Verse has radiant eloquence only when thought and verse spring to life together in one complete act of mind. In writing prose, too, the ordinary man may notice in himself the reaction on each sentence of the listening ear that claims some pleasure of melody in the sound. This pleasure maintains the feeling and stimulates the thought. Unmelodious prose jars on the ear like slight noise, and displeases just as inharmonious colours do.

For literary composition the ear plays a much smaller part than the eye in the supply of metaphor and illustration. In so far as it does play this part the same conditions of accurate and impartial observation apply to it. There rises to my mind that fine image of the four seas of Ireland roaring in sympathy whenever a blow was struck on the high king's shield. The full force of that image is not enjoyed by us unless the mighty noises of the sea which we have heard re-echo in our ears. But do most of us recall sounds as they really were, with half the vividness of remembered

sights? Are not our images of sight more realistic than those of sound?

Do we not, on the other hand, exercise our *pure creative fancy* much more in the region of sound than in that of sight? It is natural that this should be so, since we carry about with us always our own objective sound organ, *i.e.*, the voice. Certainly the ear, as the external controller of literary expression, works mainly by reference to what might almost be called structural laws of musical form. In other words, it has a special literary function as *the* organ of music rather than as *an* organ of observation. Indeed, in listening to the outside world, the *good literary ear* selects rather the musical sounds and neglects to hear at all the noises. Its literary quality turns on this selectiveness. Without this habit the ear, reacting on the words and sentences suggested by thought, would be apt to let the unmusical pass readily into being. But the fastidious ear rejects—*i.e.*, inhibits—the inharmonious phrases; and the literary ear is fastidious in

this emphatic sense that it prevents unmusical phrases from being created at all. This prevention of them is effected by not listening to them. The ear in such case listens for music, and only music passes into being through it. The literary ear has a habit of not imagining the inharmonious, and this goes with the habit of not listening to the same.

For one right way there are two wrong. The unliterary ear may be an ear that cannot help being impartial, that listens to all things, imagines all things, and has no habit of selecting the musically beautiful. Or it may be simply an unlistening ear that takes little part in the control of the word-flow, leaving that entirely to the higher powers of thought. There are writers, no doubt, with good thoughts to express who do not hear their sentences as they write them down. The intelligence is at work while the lazy ear takes its rest. In difficult matters of thought, when concentration of energy on subject-matter is imperative, it is right that no attention should be given to the

ear, but a good instinctive ear would do its work unheeded in a mind of the concrete type. We may indeed go further: its activity seems to react as stimulus on the mental powers.

So much for literature as a fine art *per se*. How does concreteness of mental reaction show itself in the logical treatment of difficult subject-matter to be expounded intelligibly? Does the Celt differ from the Teuton in this respect? The difference of French from German exposition in science and philosophy rises to mind as the notable example. The English look on and admit the difference. The Germans are great in learning, in discovery, in speculation. Judged by their output so far, they are the greatest. But as exponents of their own wisdom they are difficult to follow: we travel through the land, but do not easily find the Pisgah from which to get the comprehensive view. The French author brings you into sight of Pisgah at the earliest possible moment, and makes you climb it as soon as he can: then he conducts you, not too slowly and

in order, over the varied slopes and through the valley shades. Metaphor apart, this fine quality of exposition is not simple: it seems to turn chiefly on aptness to seize the central idea of the theme, to keep it well in view throughout the whole development of the subject, and to give the reader a grasp of it finally as a single whole.

Contrasts of intellectual method such as this tend to disappear, or to be toned down, as communication between the intellectual classes increases internationally. When my father was a student in Trinity College, Dublin, the distinctive character of French mathematical text-books was much more marked than it is now. Nothing to compare with them was written in English at that time, and they were the books prescribed for the Dublin students of that generation. When these men grew up, however, they broke the long silence of their University by writing great books on mathematics themselves, which soon became popular in England also, and stimulated improvements in method there. Several of these books—the

works of the late Dr. Salmon in particular—were translated into French and became, for the subject of which they treat, the text-books used in French Universities. These Dublin books and the older French books stand now on my library shelves. They are old friends to which I owe much. In style and method they have the same lightness of touch and swiftness of movement, advancing with much less concrete illustration and practical application than do the English books, to reach more rapidly the culmination of the argument. This quality affects one like plot-interest well-sustained and quickly developed in a story. Hence that sense of unity in subject-matter, with corresponding intellectual grasp, which soothes and charms the mind.

It is in scientific, rather than in literary, work that this trait should be observed, because it goes without saying as a characteristic of fine literature. What has been said so far amounts in fact to this, that French scientific work is expounded in a literary manner. I think the same quality will be found to charac-

terize Irish work of the same kind, so far as it goes. The Irish skill in teaching is cognate to it. But the contrast between Irish and English is a very small matter as compared with the contrast between German and French.

The same bent for unity of composition shows itself in the Celtic stories as compared with the Norse. The Norse saga is in form as Teutonic as a modern German treatise on theology. It begins not merely at, but before the beginning, and tells you how things came to be what they were when they began. With all its fine qualities, and they are fine, it has not that swift characterization which carries us into the feeling of the story at its outset and bears us quickly on.

The Celtic taste for lyric is perhaps associated with the same quality. The unity of a poem is, in part, unity of mood—one mood, or a correlated group. The lyric closes back on itself swiftly, and is complete, as one might say, in a single sweep of thought. It is in one movement, and brief enough to be complete before the opening mood dies down.

Hence it is dear to that instinct for unity which is difficult to satisfy when the necessary labour is long. An epic must be built up part by part. It cannot be created with the psychologic unity of the lyric, or idyll, or other shorter poem. Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian legend is very happy in this respect, and it follows the originals. Each idyll is complete in itself, and all together have as much unity as some epics. To carry this continuity through a great epic is an achievement much more difficult than to carry it through a great and detailed work on philosophy. Unity of reason there is between one spell of work and another, but mood in the nature of things varies from time to time.

That there is some connection between eloquence and the emotions we all know. The eloquent speaker or writer is stirred emotionally, and stirs others into sympathy with him. Without this he may be great, but he is cold, and fails to stir his hearers. Strong emotion, however, very commonly produces the effect of paralysing or confusing the intellect

and making a man speechless. Eloquence implies a wide-reaching and ready play of feeling about thought, without any loss of thought in feeling. It implies just the well-balanced, concrete state of mind, thought darting out into feeling, but self-sustained, feeling reacting directly on thought in stimulus to higher efforts. A magnificent control of words may be given in this case by the spur of emotional excitement, which thus escapes from itself as mere feeling, moving all the circles of mind to more activity. A nature merely prone to emotion—the sentimental nature—melts into feeling *out* of thought, and is silent in proportion as it is moved. To be emotional merely is to be not eloquent. Eloquence is present when the mental manifestation is so whole and at one that thought is born no less out of a matrix of feeling than it is clothed as it rises in words, images, and harmonies. That the Celt is eloquent is obvious enough. It is not at all so well known that he is not sentimental.

According to all this, it would appear that

the concrete-minded Celt is, so far as his brain power goes, the born literary artist of Europe. This has been said of him before now, and attempts have not been lacking to show that English literature in particular owes the better part of its existence to his presence in the background of British heredity. But genealogies of genius form an obscure and difficult subject, not to be argued here. My impression is that English literature is great because there were *giants* of literature in the land, not because they were persons of any particular racial strain. Our concern is with the ordinary Celtic Irish and the literary facility, apart from greatness, in which they abound—a facility which is the more remarkable when considered in relation to their average educational opportunities in the nineteenth century. It is sometimes said, however, especially by Irishmen, that there is such a thing as Celtic literary ineffectiveness—a lack of proportion between the promise and the fruit. What of this?

In the first place it is obvious that where most people have some turn for literature,

without being equally superior in other respects, there must be great possibilities of literary ineffectiveness. The first thing in writing or speaking is, after all, to have something to say. A race with the gift of expression requires the more assiduous culture of solid attainment and literary criticism. The Celt has in this sense a greater need of education than the Teuton.

And this leads us to the second point. The Celt in Europe is represented most clearly by the Irish, and Irish education is even now by no means satisfactory. Till quite recently the great majority of the people have had no higher educational chance at all, and the surprising thing is, not that they have produced so few men of letters, but that out of so small an educated minority there should have been anything like so many. The chance of the majority will come later on.

But, in the third place, it should be admitted that, apart from these conditions, there is a possibility of apparent ineffectiveness in the Celtic quality of mind. A mind of facile con-

sciousness, well-knit and ready for action at all points, makes a good show for itself always up to a certain point. It seems better than it really is, judged by any other standard. Teutonic concreteness co-exists only with much mental power, but Celtic concreteness is consistent with very little, and so the disproportion of real power to the ideal of positiveness and breadth brings about the phenomenon of ineffectiveness. The ideal is present, but the real behind it is not strong enough.

Other Celtic qualities, too, which add to the flavour of literary genius, become objectionable when the mental power is actually small. The confidence and dash, the spirit and personality which mark the Celtic page and Celtic speech—these delight us when the thing itself is good, displease us otherwise. In truth, it might almost be said of the Celt that not only does he require more education than others, but that he has also a greater demand for brains. With his gift for unity of mental manifestations he could certainly put them to excellent use.

VII

THE CELT IN RESPECT OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER VII

THE CELT IN RESPECT OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

THE title of this chapter indicates a subject that cannot be dealt with adequately in general terms till such time as careful study has been devoted to its elucidation by duly qualified observers in each of the Celtic countries. These should be persons of sufficient analytic intelligence and accuracy as observers, who have also themselves experience of the psychic gift, as to the presence of which in others they have to weigh the evidence. Of literature on the subject in this sense there is little, so far as I know, although there is without doubt in all countries containing a Celtic population a clear consensus of opinion among those who

have occasion to know. This opinion may, in the first instance, be fairly summed up with common-sense emphasis as reflected in the Lowland Scot's admiration for his Highland compatriot's spiritual "gift." Both are characteristically religious; and as to creeds, morals, and institutions they are agreed. By both the path of life is trodden with a sense of sacred responsibility to the One Eternal. But there is a difference. It is not in zeal, it is not in faith, it is not even in prayerfulness. It appears to consist in some differentiation of everyday temperament, or habitual psycho-physical attitude, which prevails in the Gaelic Scot and tends to make easy that uplift of the whole nature in a single act of spiritual aspiration, the achievement of which is the inner way of religious illumination psychologically considered. As the graphic Lowland phrase describes it, he gets "further ben" in the effort to feel after and find the presence of God. If this be so, the characteristic of the Highlander in the eyes of his Lowland co-

religionist is of the nature of that "mystic gift"—so-called as hidden from consciousness in respect of its causal origin—that gift of supernal spiritual insight which is fully described by those who have studied, on the inside, the development of Christian life in the lives of the saints, from St. Paul himself onwards.

The case of the Gaelic seer—as, for example, the Highlander who prays in the name of the congregation with "gift" so penetrating that even the careless ones, losing touch of self and mundane cares, feel themselves in the very presence of the Eternal—his case, if this power has come to him with less than the normal amount of arduous training, is clearly that of one so constituted by nature that in his act of adoration—as, no doubt, also in other fervid acts—his whole energy of consciousness is as a matter of course absorbed. His spiritual uplift is impassioned, and involves his whole personality. A person of this kind would, as I understand, be called a "natural mystic"

by those who are learned in the history and have studied the psychology of Christian mysticism. They would not, however, mean more by this than that such a person, if self-trained, as the great mystic saints trained themselves, to make the most of all his powers for the apprehension and use of spiritual truth, would come more easily into his vision of the Eternal Reality, and be more effectual also in communicating the sense of it to others. The great mystics were great because the whole nature in them was great and saintly, not simply because they had, in the first instance, an untrained facility to tread the "mystic way." None the less is it a gift to have this natural facility, since thus one is enabled to make the most of such powers otherwise as one may happen to have—to make the most also, and this is more important, of that access to grace, the transcendent life-force surging up from the deeps where the Divine is immanent in the human spirit. It is a gift to be able to concentrate the psycho-physical energy at any

one point. The gift becomes precious indeed when used habitually at the highest level.

As a fact in psychology looked at more minutely, the gift appears in the first instance to be a primitive facility in concentrating at one time the whole energy of the psycho-physical organism in subordination to the act of spiritual apprehension, whether it goes out thence to lift up all its desires and thoughts in prayer, or is banked up to rise unspeakably in adoring contemplation. It is not difficult to conceive the probability in this latter case of visions and the hearing of voices as the expression of the climax welling up from the subconscious. But these are not of the essence of the experience, and, except when appearing as guides to action,[1] are perhaps not greatly to be prized. The perfected gift is much more than all this: it implies nothing less than the

[1] Such were to St. Patrick "the voices of the Irish" which he saw written on the letters in his vision, and "the children crying in the wood of Focluth" near the Western Sea. Such also were the visions of St. Paul and the voices heard by Joan of Arc

subordination of the whole nature in all its acts of life throughout all its time to the life ideals revealed in repeated experiences of such spiritual apprehension. "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," said St. Paul. To have the vision and to be constantly obedient to it—this is the very definition of a Christian saint. To have the vision in that wide sense, whether expressed through sights and voices, as in the case of St. Paul himself, or by the quickening of all the powers of thought in the normal way to spiritual conclusions—this is to be a mystic illuminated so far as the vision goes. A person might have great gifts, great opportunities in this sense, but by neglect of their cultivation might let them become of no effect. The deadliest kind of neglect is disobedience to the vision; and this for the plain psychological reason that a mind divided against itself—the doing of it at war with the knowing—cannot maintain its power of co-ordinate uplifting as a whole. Unity of life at its highest level is the sage's aim.

The Christian way to attain such unity is life in the sense of the Divine purpose throughout.

It will, I think, be clear to the reader that however much or little significance may be assigned to evidence concerning the vivid Celtic sense of the unseen, there is an unmistakable affinity between the Celtic characteristic of mental facility and concrete unity of consciousness, as discussed in the second chapter of this book, and that capacity for concentration of life on spiritual issues, involving the interpenetration of the seen with the unseen and the sense of the eternal here and now, of which we read in the books of those who have studied the psychology of Christian mysticism.[1] Such study deals with the lives of those who were in the foremost rank as saints and teachers—St. Paul, St. Catherine, St. Francis, St. Teresa; round these four the whole doctrine may be profitably discussed. We know much less about the inner history of the Celtic saints:

[1] *The Mystic Way*, E. Underhill; *The Mystical Element of Religion*, Baron von Hügel.

for the most part they were men and women of action rather than writers, as far as we know. This was especially the case with the British Apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick. Nevertheless, we have some few reliques [1] from his hand, and with them we may begin our inquiry into the evidence of Celtic spirituality. Two documents in Latin are ascribed to St. Patrick and written in his name—"The Confession" and the "Epistle to Coroticus." It is the former which reveals the inner nature of the writer and with which we are concerned here :—

"I, Patrick, sinner, most unlearned of all
The Faithful and of many most despised,
. . . . .
I suffered capture, then not full sixteen.
I knew not the true God, and, led away
Into captivity, with thousands more,
Was brought to Ireland—fate too well deserved
For we from God had far withdrawn ourselves."

He goes on to recount how, in his six years'

[1] *The Remains of St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland*, Sir Samuel Ferguson, translated into English blank verse.

captivity, the Lord had pity on his youth and innocence :—

> "Yea, ere I knew to choose 'twixt good and ill,
> Admonished me and gave me consolation
> As father might a son."

Thus he attains, without human aid, cast, as it were, on his own resources—

> "The touch and apprehension of my God,"

and makes his "poor return" a full confession of adoring faith.

Again he is depressed by his ignorance, then comforted by conviction of his mission and God's choice of him to serve :—

"Therefore to-day it shames me to disclose
My ignorance ; because I have not learned
With brevity and elegance of speech
To treat deep things, as how the Spirit moves
The soul's affections and the human mind.
But were it given to me as it is to some,
I would not long be slow to sing His praise
Even though to some perchance in this I seem
Presumptuous with my rude and stammering tongue.
Yet it is written that the stammering tongue
Shall yet be swift to speak the words of peace.

How much the more then lies that charge on us,
Who, *Christ's epistles*, to the world's far ends
Bear word of his salvation ; not indeed
Learned words, but words of power *writ in our hearts*,
Not with pen-ink, but *by the Spirit of God.*
. . . . .
Hear and inquire, who was it raised me up,
Me, foolish me, from midst of them esteemed
Wise men and law-learned and in power of speech
As in all else prepotent, and inspired,
Me, even me, the butt of this world's scorn,
Above the rest, to be what now I am.
Here whilst at least with fear and reverence
Faithful in heart and uncomplainingly
I serve this people, to whom the charity
Of Christ assigns me, for my rest of life
If I be worthy ; that with humble heart
And truthful lips I teach it."

He reverts to the history of his conversion alone in the woods and on the mountains :—

"And holy fear and faith
Increased in me, that in a single day
I've said as many as a hundred prayers,
And in the night scarce fewer ; so that oft,
In woods and on the mountains I've remained,
And risen to prayer before daylight, through snow,
Through frost, through rain, and yet I took no ill,
Nor was there in me then aught slow as now,
For then the spirit of God within me burned."

One night in sleep a voice declares to him that he shall see his land and home. Again it says, "Behold, thy ship is ready." So he escapes with many trials from his servitude. Once more amidst his own people, there presently comes to him the call from Ireland in a night vision, the psychological interest of which is considerable :—

"In a night vision I beheld a man
Coming as 'twere from Ireland. Victor he,
Innumerable letters brought he : one
He gave to me to read. I read one line,
'The voices of the Irish,' so it ran,
And while I read, methought I heard the cry
Of them that by the wood of Focluth dwell,
Beside the Western Ocean, saying thus,
'Come, holy youth, and walk amongst us, come!'
All with one voice. It touched me to the heart,
And I could read no more, and so awoke.
. . . . .
And on another night, I know not, I,
God knows, if 'twas within me or without,
One prayed with words exceeding exquisite
I could not understand, till, at the close,
He spoke in this wise—'He who gave his soul
For thee is He who speaks!' I woke with joy.
And once I saw Him—praying as it were
Within me, and I saw myself as though

Within myself, and over me, that is
Over the inner man, I heard Him pray
Strongly with urgent groans, myself the while
Amazed and wondering who should pray in me.

. . . . .

I awoke and called
To memory what His apostle says—
'The Spirit helps the weakness of our prayer;
For when we pray and know not as we ought
What to pray for, the Spirit Himself doth pray
For us with groanings inexpressible
Not to be put in words.'"

Turning now to the early Christian Gaelic poems, attention may be directed first to the invocation known as "St. Patrick's Breastplate," or "The Guardsman's Cry," in which the strong concrete sense of Divine all-in-allness is vividly illustrated. Saints, angels, the forces of nature are all invoked to contribute to the fulfilment of the prayer which is addressed to the Triune God. The translation is by Dr. Whitley Stokes:—

I upraise myself to-day by a mighty virtue, an Invocation of the Trinity.

I believe in a Threeness, with confession of a Oneness in the Creator of the elements.

I upraise myself to-day
By the virtue of the Birth of Christ, with his Baptism,
By the virtue of His Crucifixion, with His Burial,
By the virtue of His Resurrection and Ascension,
By the virtue of His Coming to the sentence of the Judgment.

I upraise myself to-day
By the virtue of the Seraphim's love,
(The virtue that abides) in the obedience of Angels,
In the hope of Resurrection unto the reward,
In the prayers of the Patriarchs,
In the predictions of the Prophets,
In the teachings of the Apostles,
In the faiths of the Confessors,
In the innocence of Holy Virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.

I upraise myself to-day
By the light of the sun ; by the virtue of heaven,
The whiteness of snow, the force of fire,
The swiftness of lightning, the speed of the wind
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rocks.

I upraise myself to-day
By God's power to pilot me,
The might of God to uplift me,
The knowledge of God to lead me,
The eye of God to look before me,

The ear of God to hear me,
The word of God to make me eloquent,
The hand of God to defend me,
The path of God to lie before me,
The shield of God to shelter me,
The host of God to guard me,
From the snares of demons,
From the temptations of vices,
From the desires of nature,
From all that meditate evil against me,
Afar and anear,
Alone and in a multitude.

So have I invoked all these powers
Between myself and every dangerous merciless power
Opposed unto my body and my soul—
Against the incantations of false prophets,
The black laws of heathendom,
The false laws of heresy, the craft of idolatry,
The spells of women, and smiths, and druids,
And all knowledge that hath defiled the soul of man.

Christ defend me to-day
Against poison and burning, against drowning and wounds,
Until a multitudinous reward have fallen to me.

Christ be with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ below me, Christ above me,
Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left hand,
Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height.

Christ in the hearts of all who think on me ;
Christ in the mouths of all who speak to me ;
Christ in every eye that sees me ;
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I upraise myself to-day by a mighty virtue, an Invocation of the Trinity.

I believe in a Threeness with confession of a Oneness in the Creator of the elements.

Domini est salus, Domini est salus, Christi est salus.
Salus tua, Domine, sit semper nobiscum.

Side by side with this may be placed the following on St. Columba in Iona, translated by Eugene O'Curry from an Irish MS. in the Burgundian Library, Brussels. It seems likely that this dates from the early period of Irish missionary enterprise in Europe, when St. Columbanus and his companions tarried for a time in Burgundy before they went up the Rhine to Switzerland and afterwards to Italy.

Delightful would it be to me
On a pinnacle of rock,
That I might often see
The face of the ocean ;

That I might watch its heaving waves
Over the wide sea,
When they chant music to their Father
Upon the world's course ;
That I might see its level sparkling strand,
It would be no cause for sorrow ;
That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds,
Source of happiness ;
That I might hear the thunder of the clamorous waves
Upon the rocks ;
That I might hear the roar by the side of the church
Of the surrounding sea ;
That I might watch its noble surf,
Greatest of all wonders ;
That I might observe its ebb and flood
In their cycles ;
That my mystical name might be, i' faith,
"Cul ri Erin" ;
That on my heart contrition might fall
On looking upon her ;
That I might bewail my evils all,
Though it were not easy to number them ;
That I might bless the Lord,
Who orders all ;
Heaven with its countless bright orders,
Land, strand, and flood ;
That I might search in all the books
That which would help my soul ;
At times kneeling to the Heaven of my heart,
At times singing psalms ;

At times meditating on the King of Heaven,
Chief of the holy ones;
At times at work without compulsion:
This would be delightful.
At times plucking duilisc from the rocks;
At other times fishing;
At times distributing food to the poor,
At times in a hermitage;
The best guidance from the presence of God
Has been vouchsafed to me;
The King whom I serve will keep from me
All things that would deceive me.[1]

This little poem is given here partly for its interest as descriptive of life from within for the great Irish saint, the Apostle of Scotland, at times of comparative leisure on his sea-girt isle. It is relevant to the topic of this chapter's discourse as characterized by that feeling of intimacy between God and man and nature, in all the little homely things and simple ways of life, which is of the very essence of the Celtic spirit in high and low alike. As Patrick puts it in the "Confession," "Unlearning also comes from the Most

[1] *Poem Book of the Gael*, E. Hull, p. 111.

High." "God's runaway untaught" he calls himself.

For another example, exquisite in its simplicity and most racy of the soil, take the Song of Manchan the Hermit, Abbot of Lemanaghan, in King's County, who died 665, of which I quote here the first five and the last three verses; the other three describe the services of the hermitage.

I wish, O Son of the Living God, O Ancient Eternal King,
For a hidden hut in the wilderness, a simple secluded thing

The all-blithe lithe little lark in his place, chanting his lightsome lay;
The calm, clear pool of the Spirit's grace, washing my sins away.

A wide wild woodland on every side, its shades the nursery
Of glad-voiced songsters, who at day-dawn chant their sweet psalm for me.

A southern aspect to catch the sun, a brook across the floor,
A choice land rich with gracious gifts, down-stretching from my door.

Few men and wise, these I would prize, men of content and power,
To raise thy praise throughout the days at each canonical hour.

. . . . .

Brief meals between, when prayer is done, our modest needs supply;
No greed in our share of the simple fare, no boasting or ribaldry.

This is the husbandry I choose, laborious, simple, free,
The fragrant leek about my door, the hen and the humble bee.

Rough raiment of tweed, enough for need, this will my King allow;
And I to be sitting and praying to God under every leafy bough.[1]

Here you have expressed, in this seventh-century poem, the antique spirit of joyful content and pious aspiration which endures to this day and dignifies life in the cottage homes of Western Ireland.

It must, however, be remembered that this joyful contemplation, in tender kindly Irish fashion, of nature and man and the interfusion

[1] *The Poem Book of the Gael*, E. Hull, pp. 117–18.

of all with the presence of God belongs rather to the rest-time of the practically energetic Celtic saint. In this respect the early Church of Ireland furnishes a shining example of the Christian life-ideal in operation. For what is that life-ideal closely considered? Religious life in essence is life in the sense of the Divine purpose—life in all its manifestations. This implies :—(1) an inner life conformable to the mind of Christ, so as "to make of the soul a Divine instrument, a place where the Divine power dwells and incarnates itself—the equivalent of Christ" :[1] (2) it implies also an outer life devoted to furtherance in the world of conditions favourable to the development of the life for all men—the accomplishment of the Divine destiny to which the human race is called. Nor must it ever be forgotten that the pursuit of the outer result is effective, not only for its own achievement, but also as a necessary means—to minds of an extrospective cast the chief means—of promoting the inner

[1] *The Mystic Way*, E. Underhill, p. 65.

development. "Work is a kind of prayer," provided it is God-directed work. The pursuit of the inner or mystic way, "hidden with Christ in God," is, on the other hand, necessary to secure co-inherence of the man's life-purpose in the life of God, and so to preserve him from waste of energy and talent on tasks that have no real significance. Such growth towards the life of God must imply a growth in the power of self-expression under two orders, the eternal and the temporal, the contemplative and the active. "Thus the truly illuminated man," says Ruysbroeck, "flows out in universal charity towards heaven and upon earth. He is the intermediary between God and creation." For, to use the matchless metaphor of St. Paul, "the whole creation travaileth and groaneth together waiting for the revelation of the sons of God"—that revelation by which, and by which alone, the long painful process of evolution is enabled to enter on its last great stage of development in accordance with ideals of the end towards which it moves,

ideals of a world moving freely in all its parts towards the realization of spiritual communion within itself and with God.

There was no lack of Pauline practical fire in the Irish saints of these olden times. Their pagan inheritance of heroic energy and enterprise was touched to new issues, but suffered no diminution. Patrick's mission in effect changed all, but destroyed nothing. Ireland abandoned the rôle of the hero for that of the saint, though invested still with the heroic temper and its thirst for deeds. Her war policy has ceased, and the peace policy of missionary labour takes its place. Long after Columba's time, his followers carry on their spiritual warfare, and extend their conquests over Northern England and the Midlands. Monasteries tracing their origin to Iona are planted throughout Saxon Britain, and at one time it seems likely that Irish rather than Roman Christianity is likely to reign in the English land. Columbanus, who was twenty-two years younger than Columba, goes with

a mission-band to Burgundy, Switzerland, and Northern Italy to combat paganism and immorality in places which then were very dark, by establishing, after the Irish fashion, industrious and saintly communities, as examples and for instruction, in the people's midst. The old passion for adventure and enterprise which we may imagine to have possessed the Milesians on their journey West, "moved by an ancestral spirit, urging them to great deeds"—that spirit is found anew in the Irish missionaries. They visit all the islands on the north-west British coast, they go north and discover the Shetlands, they go farther north and make a settlement in Iceland. "In A.D. 870, when the Norwegians came to Iceland, there were Christians there who departed and left behind them Irish books, bells, and other things, from whence it may be inferred that these Christians were Irish." So says an old text which Zeuss quotes in his *Grammatica Celtica*. In all directions they go forth, some in search of missionary labours, some

moved by a desire for world-knowledge and new fields of learning.

There is good reason, moreover, to think that another Irishman, St. Brendan, carried his labour farther and founded a church on the American continent itself. The evidence of such an Irish settlement comes from the Norsemen who discovered Greenland for themselves towards the end of the tenth century. "The earliest Norse settlers in Greenland," writes Mr. C. F. Keary, the historian of the Vikings in Western Christendom, "heard tell from the natives of that place of a settlement on the coast opposite but far off of a body of strangers whom the Eskimos described as walking together in processions, dressed all in white, carrying long staves with cloths hanging from them, and speaking or crying out in a peculiar fashion." The opposite coast here spoken of must have been some part of North America—that Vinland or Wineland probably which the Norsemen afterwards discovered and partly settled. By the Norse this country was also

called White Man's Land or Irland-hyt-mykla, *i.e.*, Greater Ireland.[1]

Such an enterprise as this would, however, in all probability have sprung not so much from the humanistic missionary impulse as from desire to pierce the mysteries of that other world beyond the ocean wave, the idea of which had played so large a part in shaping the images of Celtic pagan mythology. The mission to Europe concerns us more.

The Irish grip on the Christian ideal in those early days must have been something more intimate and whole-natured than usual to account for its effect in this abundant output of heroic enterprise, this wide-spread fervour dedicated to spiritual uses. Significant, too, is the fact that, whereas the Celtic Church organized itself on the model of the civil institutions of the country and was friendly to native tribal law and the bardic literature, the

[1] *The Vikings in Western Christendom*, C. F. Keary. The reader who is interested will find in this book further details as to the persistent Norse tradition about Irland-hyt-mykla.

development of both was profoundly influenced by the spirit of the Church, though without any loss of their own essential character. And so we get in after-days that unity of spirit, which is so natural and yet so rare, between the tradition of pagan hero and Christian saint that was treasured so carefully by the people throughout the succeeding centuries. "They took to themselves two heroes to be centres of the national hope," writes Mrs. Green, "Finn the champion, leader of the Fiana, the warbands of old time, and Patrick the saint. A multitude of tales suddenly sprang up of the adventures of Finn, the warrior worthy of a king, the son of wisdom, the mighty hunter of every mountain and forest in Ireland, whose death no minstrel cared to sing. Every poet was expected to recite the fame in life of Finn and his companions. Pedigrees were invented to link him with every great house in Ireland, for their greater glory and authority. Side by side with Finn the people set St. Patrick—keeper of Ireland against all strangers, guar-

dian of their nation and tradition. It was Patrick, they told, who by invincible prayer and fasting at last compelled Heaven to grant that outlanders should not for ever inhabit Erin. . . . 'Around thee,' was the triumphant Irish hope, 'on the Day of Judgment the men of Erin shall come to judgment'; for after the twelve thrones of the Apostles were set in Judæa to judge the tribes of Israel, Patrick himself should at the end arise and call the people of Ireland to be judged by him on a mountain in their own land." [1]

Looking back across the Christian centuries, let us inquire whether there may not have been something in life for the pagan Gael, and in his native intuition of its meaning, that harmonized with the new vision of the supernal world, and made it from the first intelligible as a living reality—the presence of God and the godlike in man, "above all and with all and in you all," as the great Apostle says.

The student who searches out the marks of

[1] *Irish Nationality*, A. S. Green, pp. 90, 91.

pagan Gaelic religion in the workings of the ancient Irish mind is doomed to disappointment if his thoughts be bent on clear distinctions, such as we find in the development of Teutonic mythology. There is in the Gaelic myth no tangible delimitation of sphere as between gods and men and the demon hosts—nothing corresponding to Asgard, Mannheim, and Jotunheim. We know not, for instance, whether the Fomorians of story, who harried the coasts of Ulster in the dim, distant past, were early-coming invaders from over the northern seas or demon hosts from the spirit-land below the wave. Such enemies of men count for not much, however, in the mythological outlook of the cheerful Irish mind. More important are the Tuatha Dé Danann, appearing sometimes in the literature as a pre-Gaelic race of wise and mighty men, sometimes as the divine people of Ireland—the gods of the land—whose special habitation is variously conceived, now within the hills, now beneath the sea, and yet again in the upper world of men, but visible

only to those who have the gift of vision—the mystic racial affinity it may be, or relation by spiritual fosterage, on which the gift depends. Nor are these three conceptions of locality distinguished: they are present together in the same story, fused in feeling, interchangeable in thought. This, as has been well pointed out by Miss Eleanor Hull, is one of the difficulties of genuine Irish literature, "the curious feeling that we are hung between two worlds, the seen and the unseen; that we are not quite among actualities, or rather, that we do not quite know where the actual begins or where it ends. Even in dealing with history we may suddenly find ourselves wafted away into some illusory spirit world with which the historian seems to deal with the same sober exactness as in detailing any fact of ordinary life.

"There is in most literatures a meeting-place where the mythological and the historic stand in close conjunction, the one dying out as the other takes its place. Only in Ireland we never seem to reach this point; we can never

anywhere say ' Here ends legend, here begins history.' . . . At first we are inclined to doubt the accuracy of any part of the story ; but, as we continue our examination, we are surprised at the substantial correctness of the ancient records, so far as we are able to test them, whether on the historical or the social side. The poet is never wholly poet, he is also practical man ; and the historian is never wholly chronicler and annalist, he is also at the back of his mind folklorist, lover of nature, dreamer. It is the puzzle and the charm of Ireland." [1]

Those whom it merely puzzles esteem it as madness and confusion, except in so far as they may be puzzled still more by the frequent sharp outbreaks of shrewd wit, homely common sense and keen observation of nature. Those whom it charms will seek to understand it ; and it can, I believe, be best understood as a natural manifestation of the human mind under a profound sense of some all embracing reality overlying and underlying our world of human

[1] *The Poem Book of the Gael*, E. Hull, p. xxiv.

thought and natural things. The characteristic of the Celtic literature is not that it has any monopoly in this consciousness of a supernal world immanent throughout nature. All religious feeling springs from the dim beginning of this; all genuine religious thought points to its development from twilight-dawn to the full illumination of noontide. The primary Celtic characteristic is the supernormal intensity, and *prevalence for the common folk,* of this consciousness, even in the morning of knowledge when the races of northern Europe were developing their ideas of the invisible and eternal for themselves. No other pagan literature is at once so democratic in its operation, or so deeply tinged by this general sense of spiritual immanence and personality in natural things.[1] The second and more important characteristic is that in the development of the race throughout history, under Christian teaching and all the influences of Christendom,

[1] See Introduction by Stopford Brooke to *The High Deeds of Finn,* T. W. Rolleston.

this spiritual sense has preserved its original grip on the everyday imagination, its association with homely things, its regard for the little as well as the large in nature, while at the same time it has been growing up into the clearer vision of all that is implied—even outside particular religious ordinances and learned definitions of doctrine—in the God above all, working in all, and ever moving the spirit of man to be co-operant with Him. As pagan or as Christian the Celt has always, so far as his light went, been "farther ben."

Throughout the centuries the Gaelic peasant has evolved a rare intimate sense of unseen realities in contact with his nature as a whole and influencing his life in all particulars. He does not, of course, express himself in large generalizations like these, but with homely directness and without self-consciousness. Let us look at the evidence as it reveals the Irish peasant of the West to-day. He it is who best represents the characteristic Gael. Also I think the Celt of Wales will concede to him some standing as the characteristic Celt.

The Celt in Spiritual Insight

We turn first to the priceless source of information which has been opened up to the world by Dr. Douglas Hyde in his collection, at first hand from Irish speakers, of the *Religious Songs of Connacht*. Dr. Hyde's knowledge of the people and their language is profound. As a Gaelic speaker and their co-religionist he has natural advantages. His work for Ireland and Irish nationality is known to them and gives him further access to their minds. This is his estimate of their spiritual endowment :—

" A pious race is the Gaelic race. The Irish Gael is pious by nature. He sees the hand of God in every place, in every time and in every thing. . . . The spirit and the things of the spirit affect him more powerfully than the body and the things of the body. In the things he does not see he does not believe the less for not seeing them ; and in the things he sees he will see more than a man of any other race ; what is invisible for other people is visible for him. God is for him a thing assured, true,

intelligible. He sees invisible powers before him and by his side and at his back, throughout the day and throughout the night. It is from this feeling that the ordinary expressions and salutations of the Irish language come."

These he details: they speak for themselves, and as you picture to yourself in imagination the old man, the homely mother, the fresh lad, or the dainty maiden who might be speaking, you feel behind the words the pure sincerity of direct intention in the mind. For "Good-morning," the Irish Gael says "God salute you," and the customary response comes, "God and Mary greet you." To a person engaged in any work he says, "Prosperity from God on you," and for a blessing in general, "May God life-lengthen you." In such an interchange of courtesy as the taking of snuff from you, his greeting extends characteristically to kindred, and pierces the unseen: "The blessing of God be with the souls of your dead." Better known than most of these is the phrase, "God rest his soul," which in

Catholic Ireland on all occasions, public as well as private, follows the spoken reference to the name of one dead. On great occasions of national assembly, when speech turns to reminiscence of the heroes who have fallen by the way, even the stranger, if sensitive to influence, becomes aware of a deep, underlying note in the corporate consciousness, a sense of the eternal spiritual presence and of social solidarity with the honoured dead. I have in my mind a speech at the Irish National Convention, 1912, and a sudden passage in it on the heroic dead, through which ran the refrain instinctively breaking out at the end of every period, " God be with the dead, I always say." Nor is it to honoured friends alone that this tribute is paid in token of sacred comradeship between the living and the dead. Speaking of a political foe who is dead, the simple prayer " God rest his soul " springs naturally to the lips of the Irish Nationalist at Westminster. An English Member of Parliament once described to me an occasion in the old fight-

ing days when the House was startled by this utterance following the name of Mr. W. E. Forster from the mouth of one who was at that time a veritable scourge to all opponents of Home Rule. My friend understood and was touched, but there were those to whom at first the words, unexpected as they were, seemed a heartless mockery. But that was long ago.

Turn again to Dr. Douglas Hyde and his Western peasants. Following on his examples of salutation and blessing he says :—

" God is there in his mouth and before his eyes day and night. He is the true son of those old saints who spread the light of Christ throughout the world. He is now by nature a Christian from the day of his birth to the hour of his death."

Thus this careful observer summarizes the conclusions to which he is led by all the facts of deed and word observed among the living people themselves, from whom also he laboriously collected by word of mouth a miscellany of religious songs which fill two

volumes. I select a few examples as illustrative of different aspects or stages in the life of the pious soul.

Most of the religious poems—so their collector and translator tells us—which he got from the people in Connacht are giving advice to do good works. The natural bent of the people is to *practical* idealism, and the teaching of the Church, with its emphasis for the laity on attention to life rather than the understanding of doctrine, tends to the same effect. Here is an example simple to baldness :—

> Do good deeds without lie or falsehood,
> Do without lies good deeds on earth here,
> That is the one straight road to follow :
> That is the road and go not off it.

This might equally well pass for a Fenian utterance or for an instruction of St. Patrick.

The practical spirit is seen again, but with a deeper flavour, in all the songs—the prayers in song—that are for use during the performance of homely tasks about the house and in the fields. Each little hearth-song expresses

a sense of spiritual dignity and characteristic blessing attached to the due performance of the task. Here is a song for the girl who rakes down the fire to save it for the night :—

As I save this fire to-night,
Even so may Christ save me ;
On the top of the house let Mary,
Let Bride in the middle be.[1]

The same vivid sense of the unseen company and simple trust in their protecting love is shown in the following morning prayer. One need not be a Catholic to realize the comforting tenderness of this spiritual intimacy with the friendly host unseen :—

God's angels be our company
And save us while we live,
May God and holy Mary
MacDuagh and MacDara
And Columcille protect us,
And save us until eve.

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[1] After this the Rosary would be said before going to bed. Bride is another name for Bridget.

A special interest attaches to the evening prayer, from which is given below the beginning and the end. It was found in Innismaan, in the island of Aran. Another version of the same poem, and differing very slightly from it, was found in Lochaber, Scotland. It would seem, therefore, that we may have here an expression of Gaelic religious tradition that dates back to very early times.

Comparing this prayer with the last, the reader will notice the presence in it of a more developed consciousness, the craving for God-nearness as a shield from sin. Thus it opens :—

I lie down with God, and may God lie down with me,
That I may not lie with the Evil,
And that the Evil may not lie with me.

Then follows the appeal to the more intimate saints to gather round the couch :—

May the girdle of Brigit behind my back
And the mantle of Mary before me be,
And come to me, O Michael Og,
And by the hand lead me.

The last section opens and closes with the penitent's prayer to Christ :—

I make my peace with the dear Son of God.
. . . . .
One drop on my heart of Thy mercy down-shower
For every sin I have sinned to Thee.[1]

This next is more of the nature of a definite act of contrition. The sense of sin is troubled and deeper ; but its chief interest, to my mind, lies in the first line, implying as it does that inner search for God and His thoughts, "under," as the poem says, the thought of the human mind :—

Under my thoughts may I God-thoughts find,
Half of my sins escape my mind :
For what I said or did not say,
At the throne of confession I stand this day.
O Jesus sorely suffering,
. . . . .
I turn to Thee again.

One more example claims attention. It is a prayer to be said during Mass. It strikes,

[1] The intermediate lines invoke the aid of the Apostles, in particular Peter and Paul by name.

as it should, a higher note of faith, and breathes a deeper sense of that union of human to Divine which is, on the one hand, dedication, on the other, inspiration—an act of grace. As in the other prayer-songs, the saints—this time the Virgin only—are invited to participate :—

I bestow Thee my soul, Thou King of grace,
And let it not fall out of Thy control ;
Bear witness, O Blessed Virgin Mary,
In the hands of thy Son do I lay my soul.
Countenance brighter than the sun,
Shield me from ill when the race is run.

These are a few illustrations out of many that might be given. They are of the people, homely, vivid, penetrating—fragmentary signs, as it were, of a subtle spiritual storm-cloak to wrap all life about and shield the soul from woe. Coming out of church on Sundays they often say : " Good-bye, Christ ; good-bye, Mary. May the Apostles keep us till we come again."

Another witness claims our attention, a just

observer, wise in thought and words. Here is Miss Eleanor Hull's estimate of the case: she reminds us of the part which Ireland herself as homeland has played in the culture of the race.

" Where the outward distractions of life are few, the grave monotony of sea and moor and bogland, the swirl of cloud and mist, and the loneliness of waste places sink more deeply into the mind. The visible is less felt than the invisible, and life is surrounded by a network of fears and dreams to which the town dweller is a stranger. To-day, in the western isles of Ireland and Scotland, the huntsman going out to hunt, the fisherman to fish or lay his nets, the agriculturalist to sow or reap his harvest, and the weaver or spinner to wind his yarn, go forth to their work with some familiar charm-prayer or charm-hymn, often beautifully called ' the blessings ' on their lips. The milkmaid calling her cows or churning her butter, the young girl fearful of the evil eye, and the cottager sweeping up her hearth in the

evening, laying herself down to sleep at night, or rising up in the morning, soothe their fears or smooth their way by some whispered *paider* or *ortha,* a prayer or a verse or a blessing.

" The deep religious feeling of the Celtic mind, with its far-stretching hands groping towards the mysterious and the infinite, comes out in these spontaneous and simple ejaculations." [1]

More examples will be found under the heading of " Religious Poems " in Miss Hull's delightful book called *The Poem Book of the Gael.* " They are," she tells us, " the thoughts of such humble people as the poor farm servant who ' had so many things to do from dark to dark ' that she had no time for long prayers, and knew only a little prayer taught her by her mother, which laid ' our caring and our keeping and our saving on the Sacred Trinity.' "

Heaven forbid that the people of Ireland, the Celtic peoples generally, or any other

[1] *The Poem Book of the Gael*, E. Hull, p. xxxvi.

people, should lay claim in a boastful presumptuous spirit to be a peculiar people in the religious sense. I who write this am not a Celt. The thoughts of the Gael, for his part, are more concerned with his world than with himself: he knows himself in his open-eyed love of nature, his sociability, his enjoyment of company, music, and literature. His common sense and sanity, his practical talent, his social gifts, he uses liberally in reaction on his world; but he is more conscious of his defects than of his merits in their respect. All this is of a piece with that disposition to whole-natured reaction on experience in every phase, the highest manifestation of which is uplift of the psychical energies as a whole in rapt attention and response to the things of the unseen. This ability to concentrate all the psychical energies in attention within or without — a concrete attention in which the compositeness of their varied reaction is not lost—this is the quality which has been evolved by the Celtic race more particularly in the course of

its long and varied experience of life. In the Celt of history, and especially of to-day, it appears as a congenital endowment. But he has no monopoly in it: like other talents, it can be practised, it can be taught. In the meanwhile, the race that has it most highly developed has, in so far as it goes, a mission to the world. Maybe it is not for nothing that, to use the words of a good Irish Australian priest, "God scattered our people like seed o'er the lea."

What we are concerned here to notice more particularly is that the facility for uplift to the supernal world, with which manifestation of the Celtic genius this chapter is concerned, is of the essence of the natural gift which marks the "Christian mystic" in the accepted sense of that term. "Life in its wholeness is their aim," says one who has made a life-study of Christian psychology, "a concrete and actual existence which shall include both God and the world, and shall raise to their highest terms, use for their

highest purposes, that power of receptivity, that power of controlled attention, that power of energetic response which characterize consciousness."

Thus the Christian philosopher describes the Christian saint, the supreme practical mystic. In these pages it is intended to say no more than that in the outlook over humanity, as ranged in racial groups or nations, the Celtic peoples have, by some happy instinct or fortunate—though perhaps seemingly unfortunate—combination of circumstances, been shaping more than others for the realization of the type; and that not here and there on the heroic scale, but in homely guise and quiet ways on the ordinary scale of common human nature.

VIII

THE GAELIC ETHOS

This country of ours is no sandbank thrown up by some recent caprice of earth. It is an ancient land honoured in the archives of civilization, traceable into antiquity by its piety, its valour, and its sufferings. Every great European race has sent its stream to the river of Irish mind.

THOMAS DAVIS.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GAELIC ETHOS

THROUGHOUT the preceding pages Celtic character has been illustrated chiefly by reference to the facts of Irish human nature. Welsh and French and Highland Scotch are rightly held to have a clear share in the Celtic heritage, but inevitably the mind goes back to Ireland as to the Zion of the Celtic race. There is the home of the Celtic idea. Are we justified in treating its people as the typical example of Celtic nature? What has ethnology to say on the subject? How far is Irish heredity a fact of Celtic race? Are the Irish more Celtic, or, let us say much more Celtic, than anybody else?

Ethnology does not return so very certain

an answer. The Scotch and English immigrations we know. Some may be prone to overestimate them, but certain it is that, from the twelfth century to the seventeenth, wave after wave of that immigration invaded Irish shores. If all those who came from the larger island were pure Teutons, this dilution of the native element might count for much. But the earlier British races count for a good deal even in Britain now, and especially in those parts contiguous to the Irish sea. At least it is certain that the British immigrants in Ireland were considerably less Teutonic than if they had been Germans or Dutch.

In earlier days "the Danes" made settlements in Ireland, and there is no mistake about the Norse admixture now as a racial element. The Dane is strong along the east coast to-day. The Norman invasion brought in once more, under another form, a measure of his influence, and he is present in the Scotch immigration into Ulster. He is not Celtic, though neither is he pure Teutonic. The Norse-Celtic mixture

is probably one of the best, like a good marriage in which each mate supplements but reverences the other, each rejoicing to note and encourage in the children the qualities that are characteristic of the other.

Earlier still, was Ireland the home of the undiluted Celt? All research goes to show the contrary. As in other lands, so in Ireland, it would seem that the dark-haired, dark-eyed Iberian—industrious, patient, persistent, and perhaps melancholy, was there before the Celt, and was not outrooted by him. It may be that the Celt of modern history is, for the most part, racially a Celt-Iberian. The Celt of Gaul in Cæsar's time was, as Cæsar tells us, fair-haired and fair-skinned as well as tall and blue of eye. He is marked out clearly from the smaller dark Iberian. So we call them: of their language in Ireland we have no trace. But the modern Celt is more often than not dark of hair, though the blue-grey of his eye, set large and expressive between thick black lashes, marks him like a label. In stature he

varies between the types. He is tall and he is short, but nearly always of athletic build, showing in slimness and clean, strong lines. Either Celt has absorbed Iberian by intermarriage, or Iberian has absorbed Celt; samples of each race in comparative purity appearing to be, however, by no means nonexistent.

Did the Celt become Iberian, or the Iberian Celt? For the main argument in these pages it matters little what the answer. If we have been discussing Celt-Iberian, or even Iberian, character instead of Celtic, this would only mean that the Celt has disappeared and another race has come to be called by his name and to be identified with his language. It seems hardly worth while to argue here the question whether the race that preceded the Teuton and Norseman in Western Europe was mainly Celtic or mainly something else. It does not matter much; still, there are at least two good reasons for regarding it as mainly Celtic, but in some degree mixed.

Limiting ourselves to Ireland, we may in the first place note that in mental type the modern Gael of the Irish West answers well enough to Cæsar's description of the Gaulish Celt, making allowances for the prejudices of a conqueror, and one, moreover, who represented a much more advanced and strongly organized civilization. The characteristics of ingenuity, quick wit, adaptability are specially unmistakable as hints. There is an atmosphere about Cæsar's Gauls that suggests the Irishman. Too much weight must not be attached to his charge against this primitive people of fickleness in purpose. But it cannot be passed over: it stands out in marked contrast with the idealistic tenacity, will-force, and persistence in purpose shown so notably by both the Gael and the Cymri to-day. This fickleness, which Cæsar notes in his Gauls of the century before the first, may be accounted for as a natural manifestation of the quick, adaptable, genial temperament in the absence of a formative political ideal. None the less do we get from

it, by contrast with the modern Welshman's persistence, a hint for the presence in him of Iberian quality as judged also by the light of the Roman conqueror's experience. Here we deal with a fact, not an opinion. The stiffest resistance the Romans met with in Britain was from the Iberian Silures of South Wales. No doubt the Silures are there still, a patient, unforgetting people. In their stoutness as fighters they show moral, as no doubt they had racial, affinity with those unfree tribes in Ireland who, subjugated by the conquering Milesians, were used by them in more constant military service than could be required of free tribesmen, and who made of their subjection in this respect a great opportunity. The freemen of the dominant race could not be compelled to serve in the field for more than a short time each year: like the modern Briton, they had other things to do. The subject races supplied the warrior caste, living by the chase and by plunder of enemies as when, under their masters' name of Scots and in

alliance with the Picts, they harried the coast of Britain. Thus the unfree peoples supplied to the High Kings the standing army, the "Fianna of Erin," under its own military leaders, its own customs and social regulations. In due course there sprang up among the Fianna a cycle, now famous, of story and song commemorating the great deeds and other adventures of Finn and the warrior champions surrounding him. This is the second great cycle of Irish heroic literature, as the pre-Milesian cycle of the Ulster heroes and the *Tain Bo Cooalney* is the first. In this earlier literature also we read of these people as soldiers in the army of Meave, Queen of Connacht, which she brought against the Ulstermen. They were known under the general name of Firbolg, but there were three tribes, and the Fir Galian was one of them. By her husband's anxious inquiries as to the condition of their troops, Meave is compelled to admit angrily that, as compared with the Gailiana, little can be said for the rest.

"When the other troops halted to encamp, the Gailiana had finished pitching their bothies: when the others had set up their shelters, the Gailiana had finished cooking: when the others began to eat, the Gailiana had finished their meal: while the others were still eating, the Gailiana were in bed and asleep." And this superiority being maintained in courage, energy, and activity throughout, Meave considers them to be a danger to authority, and, lest they should become too powerful, scatters them throughout the host. The Milesians afterwards scattered them throughout Ireland, probably as a lower, less free class, and drew from them the armies of whose prowess we hear in the fourth century. It would seem that a taint of Firbolg heredity is not likely to detract from the character of the Gaelic race. All the old Irish peoples appear to have been good fighters. The Milesians of the histories stand out as being wise rulers and social administrators also; and nothing we know of them is more

to their credit than the fact that the subject races attained to position and honour under them, and this in more ways than one. But of this, more later.

As regards Irish ethnology, therefore, the presence of the Firbolg must be fully, and may be gladly, admitted. As to the physical traits, one leans to the notion that the Celtic heritage of blue-grey eye, seeing, too, how expressive a feature it is, has more racial significance than the dark hair that may be an Iberian heritage. The fair skin, too, is a mark of the Gael, but the soft climate of Ireland goes far to make skins fairer than they would be elsewhere.

The more fundamental fact for us is that the language of the so-called Celt is the Celtic language. In Ireland, Highland Scotland, and the Isle of Man it is the Gaelic branch of Celtic speech, with inconsiderable dialectic variations in each of these centres. This fact, though not conclusive as to race, throws the burden of proof on those who would contend

that the Gael by language is not in the main a Gael by nature also. The Gael by language was the man to whom all Gaelic traditions of culture, story, and manners came down. Into that heritage all the races of ancient Ireland entered at an early date, though equality before the law and recognition at court of the subject people's literature as a Gaelic classic did not take place till the tenth century. This literature was the story of the Fianna of Erin: up to the time of the great famine it was still green in the West.

With the rise of the Fianna of Erin from the subject races, intermarriage between the races may have become more common than before, though we hear of it even in the old Ulidian stories. The daughter of Queen Meave is affianced to the Firbolg champion Ferdiad. Intermarriage has, in fact, been going on all through the centuries. No one can feel sure, but the final impression is that the Firbolg has been for the most part absorbed, that it is the Gael who looks out of the big violet eyes

and expressive countenances of the beautiful Connemara children.

Whether this dominance of the Gael in the western race-mixture be a simple ethnological fact, or depends on the Gaelic social gift, we cannot tell. Certain it is that the Gael in a community is apt to be like the little leaven that leavens the whole lump. His expressiveness, responsiveness, and interesting individuality make him a lively social force, transforming others into or towards his own likeness. In a family, if the mother is Irish, the children are Irish: if the father is Irish, the result is much the same. Indeed, it happens not infrequently that the Celtic expressiveness so stimulates response as to Celticize whole households and social circles, by direct personal influence, and for the most part unconsciously. An Irish nurse or an Irish butler may be a potent influence on all the juniors of a family. Men of English race who have been brought up in Ireland are often aware of this, and it is easy to understand. The

sociable Gael, imaginative and sympathetic, is in all ranks of life a born educator. People who know him, especially the young people, confide in him, are stimulated by his interest in them, listen to him with delight, become his comrades, and profit by his manners. And so, no doubt, in those distant times the Gailiana and the other Firbolgs scattered through the fighting host, or dispersed among the tribes as rent-paying tenants on the land, enjoyed much free converse with the lively minded Gael, and caught from him the social spirit and literary skill which bore fruit later in that notable collection of story and song which we can study for ourselves to-day. The literary Gael, with his educational organization of druids, bards, and brehons, had no doubt advantage over the gallant but more primitive Firbolg. Other things being equal, when two peoples mingle, spiritual dominance is apt to go to the one that makes, or has first made, the stories and the songs.

Briefly, this is how the Gaelic literary

honours stand divided, in view of the most recent research into the origin of the Fenian stories. Of the two great cycles of Irish heroic romance, the earlier was the Ulidian series—*i.e.*, the *Tain Bo Cooalney* and the other stories of Cuchulain and the Ulster champions. This is the Gaelic original, thoroughly Gaelic in race as well as Gaelic in language. Its discourse is much of champions, a little of gods or faery, a very little of wild nature spirits and demon hosts. It moves in the setting of a free province and a kingly court, to the honour and preservation of which all manly virtues and loyalties are devoted. This was before the days of Tara and the Milesian High Kings, to whom there is no reference in any of the stories. The Milesians, coming later, succeeded the Ulidians in power and military fame. They made themselves masters of Ireland, but they have no masterpiece of literature standing in their name. From comparison of the evidence, it appears that the Milesian bards adopted the Ulidian hero-lore during the seventh century.

The recovery of the *Tain Bo Cooalney,* which was lost, is a poetic way of saying this. The subject tribes, however—and no doubt the Milesians also—must have been in touch with some of it at least long before this time. It is reasonable to assume that this contact for them was their education in Gaelic social ideas, and their original stimulus as artists in Gaelic literature. Genuine literature, too, it is, this Fenian cycle of story and song, telling not of kings and courts, but of the people's heroes and the things the makers knew. It tells of the common people's heroes as masters of war and the chase, lovers of animals and nature, equal to the best in championship, the gentle arts and all high courtesy, but just the Fianna (or fighting bands) of Erin sprung from the soil, and casting over hill and valley throughout the land a vesture of song and story that will last while Ireland lasts.[1]

[1] See "Celtic Texts," vol. vii. *The Lays of Fionn*, Introduction, Eoin MacNeil, and also *Text-Book of Irish Literature*, Eleanor Hull, Part II., chaps. i.–vi.

Thus the Gaelic ethos in those early days worked on the subject people, and in the tenth century their contribution to Gaelic literature began to be adopted by the official bards of Tara and written down by the Christian scribes, who added to it their own fine story of Patrick's meeting and friendship with the ancient Fenian heroes, Oisin and Caoilte, who had wondrously survived to his day. By the time that the Milesian story of the invasions was made, setting forth the doctrine that all the people of Ireland sprang from the same stock, the obvious facts were, as we may surmise, sufficiently consistent with the story. The Milesians were more than conquerors: they absorbed into their body politic and spiritual the good material which they found in the land of their adoption. Ireland, before the Norman came, may be described therefore as Gaelic in mind no less than in speech, with a fringe of more or less assimilated Norse on the eastern coasts.

The Norman stayed and multiplied, and

bands of Englishry followed him century after century, till the fairer lands of Ireland had passed from Gaelic to English as they had passed from Iberian to Gaelic hands. And from time to time there came mighty breaths of the English ethos too; and in due course the English power set up its Church and language, its customs and its laws. So after long struggle, and at the cost of much loss in national vitality over-ruled and wasted, the language and the laws and even the literature of the English came to be fairly established. But the English institutions which flourish best to-day are those within which the English ethos is being replaced by the workings of the Gaelic spirit upon them. Such are the language and the literature of the English-speaking Irish. The new social order which is coming in has the old Gaelic ideals at its core. A great work remains to be done in the transformation of national education.

The adjustment of institutions in Ireland to Irish ideals is indeed far from complete, but we

may hope that the struggle in the old unhappy way is nearly over. We have still to see what Irish ideals will do as applied to our new modern Ireland in a state of liberty.

Meanwhile, what has happened in the personnel of that mixture of races which has been forming for these six centuries since the Norman invasion? Whatever the politics of the Anglo-Irish, what is their mental type? In the racial mixture does the Gael contribute the larger share of spiritual heritage? In the social mixture does his type act on other types to educate them in his likeness?

These questions have been answered before. It is from the history of the English in Ireland that we know what the power of the Irish idea is. The Irish nation of to-day is indeed a racial compound mixed and mixed again, but the dominating quality of the Gaelic ethos, the educative genius of the Gaelic nature, has trained the alien elements for the most part into conformity with the spirit of the Gael.

An objection, however, suggests itself and demands a reply. Celtic, and therefore Gaelic, nature as described in these pages seems to turn upon a very essential characteristic rooted in racial physique. If this be so, how is it possible that it should be acquired by an alien under any educative process?

In the first place, it is a quality—a notably human quality—that under favourable circumstances can be developed. We can give ourselves a worse or a better chance of developing it. In the second place, that better chance is probably best given by the stimulus of personal contact with those pre-eminent in the quality. And in the third place, the Anglo-Irishman, unless he be of superior mental calibre, seldom has it in the same degree and with the same instinctiveness as the Irish Gael. The non-Gael left to himself reverts to his racial type. He must return again and again to his source of stimulus in Gaelic circles if he would maintain his character as quasi-Gael. And this I say from personal experience,

having claim to but a small share, if any, in the ancient Gaelic stock.

To the Gael himself it is not the racial stock in the flesh that seems to matter, but the ideals of the race and their preservation for the Irish people, and, though he may not think of it, for the world. It is to the spiritual Ireland, as to the "spiritual Israel," that the promises are fulfilled.

Before the first Norman set his foot upon Irish soil, the Irish nation had achieved a spiritual reality—a grip on the eternal truth of real civilization—that could not be annulled. It had fused all elements of the prehistoric and older historic stock, it had assimilated the Danish settlers, it did in time absorb the Normans and the train that followed them. Then came the long dark centuries during which, to all outward seeming, the Irish nation suffered shipwreck and was destroyed. But the ideals of Irish civilization were never destroyed, and worked like leaven in the superincumbent alien mass. The seed

of life—the spiritual Ireland—grew secretly through all those darkened times. Now it has grown to fuller manifestation than ever before, and stands forth tall and strong in the field of the world, with the alien elements once more grafted into it. This is the triumph of Irish nationality : it is the triumph of the Celtic spirit in history : conquering nothing, it wins by consent. The spiritual Ireland was too real to die—too true to human type. Out of long tribulation it arises and renews its strength, using now in the wider circles of the English-speaking world its gift of drawing out the fine humanity of others, which in practice is the essence of the genius of the Gael.

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